

THE STORY OF  

---

A TERRIBLE LIFE



By BASIL TOZER

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*Extract from the League of Nations Report of the Special Body of Experts on Traffic in Women and Children.—1927*

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## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

A WOMAN of atrocious life has lately died in France

I met her first, many years ago, in New Orleans. At that time I was wandering the world over with an old school companion the late Joseph Tasker, formerly of Middleton Hall, Brentwood, who then had recently inherited a fortune of £800 000 sterling, which he was trying, very successfully, to squander.

Afterwards we came across her in many lands but not until the War when I had occasion to be in close touch with her at a French base for over a year, did she gradually relate to me, bit by bit, the whole story of her extraordinary career.

As relatives of hers bearing her name are living still, I have thought it best throughout this narrative which is true in substance and in fact, to give her a fictitious name—I have called her Madame "Messaline." But the thousands who knew her will readily recognise her. She is said to have amassed between 1914 and 1919 a sum exceeding six million francs. What the whole of her prodigious fortune amounted to when she died will for a reason explained later, probably never be known.

Though, for the sake of convenience, the

history of her life is related here in the form more or less of a story, nothing is said that was not actually told to me by the woman herself; where paragraphs appear in quotation marks, such paragraphs are her exact statements and set down in her own words so far as I can recollect them. I hope only that what is said may serve as a warning to those young and middle-aged and sometimes even old people who think they know all that there is to be known on this subject, and so put them on their guard against blackmail and other evils.

B J. T.

# A TERRIBLE LIFE

## CHAPTER THE FIRST

"I AM not ashamed of my life; I never have been and I never shall be," Madame Messaline said to me once. "After all, this thing has to be. . . ."

Her father, she told me, had been an Italian merchant doing well. Her mother—Circassian and very beautiful. Born in France, she had, at the age of twelve, been sent to a convent to be educated. But there they kept her less than a year. She was "all that was most bad," the Mother Superior declared. Her presence in that abode of sanctity was considered to be a menace to the other girls, and so when barely thirteen she had to go.

"Was I sex-mad at twelve?" was another remark she made to me. "I wonder!"

She thought she must have been. She couldn't remember the time when the sex instinct was not strong in her. At the convent they tried to teach her to fear God and to believe in a Heaven and a Hell and a Purgatory. She never could. But then she never tried to, she said. She admitted to me that she never had a conscience, so she must have been born abnormal.

And, for that reason, ought she to be wholly blamed for her after life? Though never really beautiful, she had most astonishing eyes. Strange eyes they were, and wonderful. Hypnotic and of a colour impossible to define—at times they appeared to be a deep grey—they seemed to pierce right into you. Her mother's eyes had been like hers, she said, and her mother, too, had been abnormal. She had not loved her mother.

To men she was a human magnet. To men of all ages she appealed in a way that I have never known any other woman appeal.

She began her distorted life a year or two after the convent had expelled her.

"Passion in me even at that age was intense," I remember her telling me. "It was so overwhelming that it frightened me sometimes. It carried me away, swept over me like a great wave, and often I wondered if other girls of my age, or of any age, ever felt as I did."

Naturally, men soon took advantage of her. She fell finally to a debauched *roué* old enough to be her father. But he was in love with her—actually, worshipped her when she was fifteen. Her father died when she was sixteen and her mother sold her to the *roué*.

They say that Nature is often bountiful with one hand while with the other.

Nature had endowed Messaline with exceptional intelligence and an amazingly quick acting brain.



But of love in her composition there was none. To her the word love was meaningless. It was all Passion. She lived with her libertine for three years; then he died, leaving her fifty thousand francs. He had shown her so much of the world, told her such things, made her see for herself so much of the evil side of life, that at nineteen she was absolutely corrupt, and passionate still to the verge of madness.

And then, all at once, she became fired with a wild ambition. Riches! She would try to become one of the richest women in the world! That, henceforward, should be her aim in life.

But how?

The way lay clear before her. It was the way she knew scores of men and women had amassed large fortunes—easily, quickly. It was a way that she felt would interest her, too, perhaps because it was so vile. It appealed to her distorted imagination—the imagination her seducer had inflamed.

So when one day a young and attractive widow, almost a child to look at, engaged a suite of apartments in the most expensive hotel in Berlin, naturally people noticed her and soon began to talk about her.

And she had gone there to be noticed and talked about—partly, but not wholly. That was why she looked so demure; it was part of her plan. She was always alone, too. She talked to nobody and no one spoke to her.

At least for some weeks. Then one day the individual she had lain in wait for arrived at the hotel.

She was the Countess X and enormously rich and with a dubious reputation. People nudged each other when she came into the hotel lounge, and *whispered to one another*. And then some of them would grin in a significant way. They dared not say anything in her disparagement aloud, however. In point of fact, few knew anything about her definitely. Everything was hearsay, rumour. But when rumours are so rife they are seldom without truth.

Messaline had reason to know that the Countess X stayed frequently at that hotel, that rarely a month passed without her coming there. She was, too, one of the few people who did know a lot about the Countess's private life, how she spent her time, and how she came to be so rich. And that was why she had set out to meet her.

As she had expected, however, she had no need to try to scrape acquaintance with the Countess. She guessed she would have only to wait, and she was right.

She had waited only three days, when what she had expected happened. On the evening of the third day after the Countess's arrival, Messaline, wearing one of her most alluring frocks, sat alone at a table in the hotel restaurant, waiting for her dinner to be served, when the Countess sailed into the room, and on the

instant was the centre of attraction for a hundred eyes.

She looked about the crowded room for a few moments, saw what she wanted, and made her way nonchalantly towards the table where Messaline sat alone.

"I wonder—would you mind?" she said as she came up to her. "I don't think there is another vacant place."

Messaline, looking up at her, let her telling gaze fix itself on the eyes of Countess X. Then she smiled—the smile that had made men rave about her.

"But of course," she replied. "Do please sit at this table. I shall be charmed."

Before the meal was over they were deeply interested in each other. Messaline was thinking what a wonderful actress the gracious Countess would have made. The Countess was wondering what the story of this perfectly adorable child widow could be.

The Countess stayed longer at the hotel than she had meant to. It was the widow who kept her there—the widow on whom she had designs, and who had designs on her. Both were indeed admirable actresses.

Messaline had adopted a fictitious name, and told the Countess an entirely fictitious and plausible story of her life—how she had been married in Italy to a young American naval officer who idolised her and had died of dysentery within the year. Her only child, her "darling baby," had gone to Heaven when a

few months old. The shock had been terrible—oh, but too terrible! She had been delirious after it for weeks and in hospital for four months. She had come to Berlin under the doctor's orders to find distraction, to save herself from going mad. It was all very touching, quite pathetic, and the Countess melted towards her—or appeared to.

Whilst talking, Messaline had with difficulty kept her sense of humour within bounds. *That* woman sympathetic, held by emotion? The idea was too quixotic!

"Won't you come and stay with me at my country place?" the Countess said some days later. "I live right away in a forest, and I should love to have you there. The glorious country and the splendid air will do you good, my darling."

It had come to that already, "my darling" and "my dearest." Messaline appeared to hesitate. The Countess was too kind, she declared. She must think it over.

Yet in the end she accepted, as all along she had meant to do. She had come to the hotel for the express purpose of being invited to stay at that strange castle that she had heard about, deep down in the German forest. Oh yes, she knew much of what went on there, too. She had even told herself that she meant one day to own that castle! In after years she did come to own it—but that is another story.

At the tiny wayside railway station the Countess's carriage and pair awaited them.

Nobody else got off the train and the place was quite deserted. Messaline looked about her. Nowhere was there sign of human habitation. The country all around them was of the wildest and they seemed to be miles from everywhere.

The distance to the castle must have been fourteen or fifteen miles, judging by the time they took to get there; and by the time they arrived, after their long drive through dense forest, darkness had set in. Then, in the light of the rising moon, Messaline beheld for the first time the tall, forbidding grey walls of the centuries old pile standing out in blurred relief. It looked to her mysterious, sinister. And suddenly she felt, for the first time, a pang of fear. Had she risked too much in thus placing herself in the power of this woman of whom she knew so much? For how, if she wanted to leave, would she be able to leave without her hostess's knowledge and consent?

In none of the windows was there any light, and that increased her sense of loneliness. Then all at once the Countess spoke.

"Darling child," she said softly, "what a joy to have you with me. I mean to make you very happy here."

Messaline did not reply. "Very happy here." How ominous those words sounded under the circumstances. Almost as though the Countess meant to keep her there for ever!

The great oak door was opened by a curious-looking woman who cast a sidelong glance at

Messaline, then smiled a welcome. Messaline told me she hated that smile; it seemed to mean so much. She knew that type of smile and what it generally implied

The Countess herself took her to her room. It was a large, high-ceilinged apartment on the second floor, with a big double bed, and what at once attracted her attention was the *bizarre* wall-paper, also the character of the few pictures hanging there. The very atmosphere of that room seemed, somehow, to oppress her even more than the atmosphere of the castle itself, or as much of the castle as she had seen. Her trunks had been unpacked and taken away. One of her evening frocks lay on the bed, ready for her to put on. It was the one she had worn on the evening she had first met the Countess. The rest of her dresses and all else belonging to her had already been tidied away in the wardrobes and chests of drawers.

"To-morrow you shall have a maid," the Countess said. "I have not one for you to-night."

They dined alone at a small table in the middle of the big dining-room. Only maids waited on them, and Messaline was struck by their curious expression. Though all four knew their duties, they had not the appearance of domestics. And though good-looking, they all looked so sad, so utterly weary. Not one of them once whispered to another, nor was there the trace of a smile on a single face throughout the meal. They somehow gave the

impression of being in deadly fear of something—or of someone.

The unelaborate dinner was most excellent. When it was over and the two women were alone in the artistically furnished *intime* little *boudoir*, where their coffee was brought to them, the Countess came over to the low divan where Messaline sat half reclining, and sank down close beside her.

"I hope you will be happy here, my darling," she murmured. "I hope you will."

Their conversation after that was intimate; and when, later, Messaline had gone up to bed, the Countess came into her room wearing a *peignoir* of a curious design, and kissed her.

"I am so glad I met you," she said. "It was most fortunate. Tell me, my darling, do you miss your poor husband very much?"

Messaline made some reply, and her hostess went on:

"Tell me about him, won't you? Tell me everything, how he treated you, how much he loved you. . . ."

And so they talked on until far into the night, Messaline inventing story after story about a husband who had never existed and a child who had not been born!

She was more than half asleep after the Countess had left her when something made her become suddenly wide awake. A cry! Yes, she had heard a cry. She was sure of it. She sat up in bed in the darkness and listened intently, hardly breathing. For a minute or

two she remained like that, but there was no sound. Yet the cry had not been far away. At last, curiosity getting the upper hand, she pushed down the bed clothes, stepped out on to the floor, crept over to the door and opened it a little way very quietly.

Again she listened. But the dark corridor, too, the whole castle apparently, was as still as death.

And yet she knew that she had heard a cry, a loud cry.

With a little shiver she closed the door noiselessly and got back into bed.



## CHAPTER THE SECOND

THE maid who came to her in the morning she soon realised was a perfect servant. When after breakfast, which was brought to her in bed, she was having her hair brushed, she tried tactfully to find out more about the castle and what went on there. But every time the maid, though quite respectful, cleverly evaded giving a single direct answer.

Thus she did not know which was the town nearest to the castle; there were several towns but all were a good way off, she imagined. What towns were they? It might seem strange, but really she couldn't say. She had never had occasion to ask.

"But there are villages near, I suppose?" Messaline said.

Probably there were, but none that the maid knew of.

Then she inquired about the roads through the forest. Were there many?

The maid thought not, but could not say for certain.

"I suppose you have not been here long," Messaline went on.

"Not a great while, madame."

"Are there many servants here?"

"Oh, yes, quite a number."

And so it went on. There was nothing to be got out of the girl. She "thought" and "imagined" and "supposed," but apparently knew nothing definite about anything or anybody or even about the castle itself.

"Looking out through the window in the massive stone structure when alone again, Messaline saw unfolded beneath her as far as sight could stretch an unending, undulating forest—not a monotonous forest of dark pines, but a gorgeously lovely forest containing apparently every variety of tree and every shade of green possible to conceive.

She craned her neck to look as far as she could to right and left, and on both sides it was the same—trees, trees, trees, the boundless, endless forest rolling away in every direction like the great waves of a surging ocean.

When she went downstairs she found the Countess in the hall, dressed to go out, and was at once taken in her arms and kissed.

"And now, my darling," her hostess said after a conventional inquiry or two as to how she had slept, and so on, "I will show you everything so that you may not lose yourself in the park or in the castle itself."

It was as she had expected. On the opposite side of the castle the view was just the same. They were completely surrounded by the vast forest and literally in its heart.

The gardens and lawns, or what had been gardens and lawns however, were very badly kept, or rather not tended at all. The grass

had not been cut for months, apparently; the very shrubberies resembled forest undergrowth; and what had once been a big kitchen garden was a mass of weeds and brambles with neglected "domestic" vegetation running riot amongst it all.

"It is so difficult to get male labour all these miles away," the Countess apologised. "In fact impossible."

Presently Messaline noticed at the back of the castle an apparently endless high wall with twisted strands of wire along its top. It curved away and disappeared at a point some hundreds of yards from where they stood, and while she wondered how it came to be there and why it had been built, the Countess spoke again.

"That wall has been here many, many years," she said. "A former owner of the castle kept wild animals in that enclosure, some say, while there is a story, fantastic I think, that the owner had a son who was mad and dangerous and that he kept him inside there."

Messaline did not speak at once in reply to that, she told me. That wall, so strangely out of place, somehow fascinated her. Thoughts, too, had rushed in upon her, she said, which made her wonder if the Countess did not lie.

For to begin with the wall had not the appearance of age. On the contrary, it looked almost as though built of recent years. Also the ivy and other creepers only half covered it; but perhaps they had been planted recently.

And that twisted wire along the top, surely that was comparatively new!

These and other reflections, however, she kept discreetly to herself. To see what was on the other side of that wall was the resolution she formed.

Inside the castle was the same atmosphere of mystery and secrecy. The Countess took her into rooms on the ground floor, on the first floor and on the second floor, and in most of them she saw beautiful furniture, all of it antique. Yet it struck her that her hostess had little to say about the place, even that she seemed, while showing her round, to be not wholly at her ease.

"The north and west wings I keep shut up," she presently said carelessly. "They are really an encumbrance, as I never entertain here. Indeed how could one entertain in such a place? Who would drive all these miles for the poor privilege of accepting such hospitality as I might be able to offer them?"

"Which is your nearest town?" Messaline took the opportunity of asking again.

"We are not near any town," came the quick reply, "and the nearest village is seven miles off."

So she didn't entertain here! Messaline smiled to herself. She knew better than that. In fact she knew a great deal that would have astonished her hostess had the latter suspected. And those shut-up wings that were an "encumbrance"! Yes, she would explore them

too, and very soon<sup>†</sup> For she had long prided herself on always accomplishing anything that she set herself out to accomplish And now she believed, felt certain, that when she had penetrated the walled in enclosure and made her way into the north and west wings the secrets of the castle would be disclosed

Three days passed and nothing happened Messaline had been left almost entirely to herself, for though she saw her hostess during the morning, after lunch the latter disappeared, to reappear only in time to dress for dinner

What became of her during the afternoon, Messaline wondered? Did she remain in the castle, or go out into the forest or visit the mysterious enclosure or equally mysterious north and west wings?

And though left to herself, Messaline knew that she was watched, that her every movement was noted Three times she had started out to try to discover the entrance to that enclosure, for she argued that there must be some sort of an entrance to it other than through the castle And each time she had been met or overtaken by one or other of the servants as if by accident She had then been told that a little farther on there was a fence which she would not be able to get through or over She had been told there was a dangerous bull at large in the meadow next but one Always some plausible reason was given to prevent her proceeding farther

And her attempts to penetrate into those

closed wings of the castle had been equally frustrated. Invariably a maid had appeared unexpectedly when she had gone a little way along the corridor leading in their direction, who had placed some obstacle on her going farther. That was why she knew that she was watched.

At night she had lain awake, thinking how best to outwit these people. She had not heard the cry again, but twice in the middle of the night she had fancied she heard strange sounds—once it was the sound of laughter. On another night she had felt sure she heard a man's voice.

On the fourth night after her arrival she awoke suddenly. She looked at her watch. It was half past two in the morning. Listening carefully, as she had got into the habit of doing, she heard distinctly, some way off, the sound of horses' hoofs. It was a fine, still night and her window was open, so she got out of bed and went over to the window.

There she could hear the horses quite plainly. They were trotting along a soft road somewhere at the back of the castle. Not the road she had arrived by, which was in front of the castle. Carriages driving away, she decided. During the quarter of an hour or twenty minutes she stood at the window she heard five carriages drive away. Then a great gate clashed—an iron gate, she felt sure. That must be the entrance to the enclosure which she had tried to find.

An idea came to her. There would be nobody in the corridor at this time of night. She would try again now to make her way into that wing.

Wrapping her dressing-gown more closely around her, she went out into the passage, carrying her bedroom candle-stick. Noiselessly she crept along the long, thickly-carpeted corridor. At the end it turned right and left. The left corridor would lead to the north wing, she decided, so she proceeded along it. Still there was no sound. The corridor began to curve, and at the end of the curve she came to a door.

She looked for the handle. It had none, nor was there lock or keyhole, so far as she could see. She put her open palm on the door to push it, and realised at once that it was a metal door, locked or bolted on the other side.

What happened, what was happening at that moment on the other side of that door? Her curiosity became intense. At all costs she must, she would find out. But of course not to-night. That would be impossible.

Turning to go back, she found herself face to face with the Countess!

The Countess was not in a dressing-gown. She wore a most peculiar costume. It was not a frock and it was not pyjamas and it was almost diaphanous. Her hair, which was very long and beautiful and like a girl's, was dressed in an odd fashion. Even in that tense moment Messaline was struck by the youthfulness of

her figure. She looked far more beautiful than she had ever looked before. But in her eyes, as she smiled, was an odd glint.

"So you have missed your way, you poor child," she said. "Or were you walking in your sleep?" she added, smiling again.

As her arm encircled Messaline's shoulders, Messaline could feel it trembling. And when a woman's arm trembled like that, she knew what it meant. She must be on her guard, for her hostess was only acting.

"I wonder what woke you up—and why you came along this way?"

Messaline could hear her breathing now, feel her warm breath upon her cheek. To attempt an excuse would, she knew, be useless.

"Dear," she said, looking straight into the Countess's eyes, "I am going to tell you the truth. I woke up and heard carriages driving away. I am dreadfully curious by nature—I always have been—and that excited my curiosity tremendously. So I thought I would try to find out what was going on. I came out of my room and wandered along these corridors in what I imagined would be the direction that would bring me to where your guests are—I suppose they are your guests?—and suddenly I found myself facing this door which I am not able to open."

The Countess gave such a peculiar laugh that Messaline started. Then after a moment's pause she replied:



"But of course, my darling, you shall see my guests. It was to present you to them that I asked you to come here to stay—only I meant to defer that pleasure a little longer. Still, I daresay what you will see will satisfy your curiosity," the peculiar laugh came again. "Just turn your back a moment."

Messaline did so. When she turned again the door stood open.

"Come—follow me."

"What, in this *peignoir*?"

"You may find it necessary to dispense even with that *peignoir*. Come."

The Countess led the way along a low narrow passage quite unlike the high corridors. The metal door had shut behind her. They passed through two ordinary doors and then suddenly the sound of music soft and languorous, floated towards them up the passage. As they drew nearer to it there were voices—men's and women's and an occasional low laugh.

The apartment they entered was octagonal and only dimly lit by lamps cunningly shaded. The musicians were invisible. The entire floor was a litter of cushions and divans, on which the stretched out figures were for the most part discernable only in outline. The atmosphere reeked of some heavy perfume.

It was a large apartment. On several sides of it were doorless *portières* heavily curtained. As Messaline's eyes grew accustomed to the gloom she was able to see the recumbent forms

more clearly. This was more or less what she had expected—yet not all.

None seemed to notice them as they threaded their way between the divans towards one of the *portières*. The Countess still led the way, holding Messaline now tightly by the hand. Beyond the curtains, which the Countess drew apart and passed under, then carefully drew together again, was a passage not unlike the one they had just come along.

“What you have seen has not distressed you, I hope?” the Countess murmured, still gripping Messaline’s hand in her own. Her voice was suddenly hard. She seemed to speak with restraint only with an effort. . . .

When Messaline awoke next morning it was past noon. Her head felt heavy and her mind was dull. She tried to think of all that had happened the night before, but the effort of thinking hurt her. She could remember following the Countess along the narrow, low-ceilinged passage and across the dimly-lit octagonal apartment and passing under the curtains on the opposite side of it, but after that everything was indistinct and her mind almost a blank.

Yet not entirely blank. Somewhere in her memory a man hovered. His features she could hardly recall at all, but she thought he had been tall and—yes, there had been something familiar about him. And he had frightened her. He had seized hold of her and been

rough—and the Countess had been there and had helped him in some way. . . .

She put her hands on her burning forehead, trying to piece together exactly what had happened, but it was no good. The more she tried to think, the more her head ached. She could recollect in a vague way being made to drink something which she had not wanted to drink, had even struggled to avoid swallowing. . . .

Some sort of drug it must have been, she supposed. Presently strange dreams she remembered having, returned to her in fragments . . .

She shuddered. It had all been a dreadful nightmare, or so it seemed to her now. And then she cursed herself for having come to this place, for having intentionally made the Countess's acquaintance, knowing as much as she knew about her even then.

All at once she started. Why, this was a different room she was in! And a different bed. Everything was different. She turned over in the bed, meaning to look about her—

She gasped. Seated at the bedside, watching her with a cynical smile, was a man whom at one time she had known more than intimately.

### CHAPTER THE THIRD

HE gave a little chuckle

"So we meet again," he said, still smiling  
"And after all the rude things you once said  
to me!"

For some moments she could not speak

"Isodore!" she exclaimed, almost in a  
whisper "Isodore, how do you come to be  
here?"

"You mean at your bedside? Surely it is  
not the first time!"

"I mean, in this house—this castle"

"I could ask you the same question—if I  
didn't know But she has told me"

"You were here last night, then?"

"What! You don't remember?"

"I remember nothing clearly—about last  
night My brain feels fogged Then it was  
you who"

"Yes it was I who is you so prettily  
put it"

"Oh, Isodore for God's sake don't joke I  
must get out of this place and at once. I was  
a fool to come here I ought to have known  
I did know"

"But of course you knew *chérie* You  
knew quite well Only you wanted to see for  
yourself And you had an object in coming  
here a very definite object. Am I wrong?"

She did not answer

"You forget it was I Messaline dear, who told you about her first I think others told you afterwards And you wanted to become like her, didn't you? You want still to become like her—rich! rich! I remember your saying so once"

She made a gesture of impatience

"How can I escape from here?"

"You can't," he laughed

"But I must, I must!"

He leant forward and kissed her

"Your lips are as sweet as ever, *chérie* Well, perhaps you shall escape, but if you do it will be through me, and I shall want you to remember that She means to keep you here—always Just as she keeps others These two wings of the castle, she calls 'the bastille' "

"That is what I thought guessed—that she meant to keep me here, but I realised it too late But why are you here, Isodore?"

"Why? Because I am her partner"

"You! But how—her partner?"

"Don't you understand? Haven't you guessed that too?"

"Only partly Tell me, I want to know everything Who were those people I saw last night? I am beginning to remember them now Where did they come from?"

"Her guests, all of them—the men Some of the women too, for that matter Who were they? Germany's aristocracy and nobility, or

some of it—and her degenerates. The girls—well, they mostly live here, in the bastille enclosure. They will never get out of here until they are drafted by my partner or myself.

“You are partners, then, in *that* sort of business?”

“*I hat* sort of business. And a very paying business, I can assure you, as I told you long ago when you suspected I was in it.”

“Tell me more—about the girls, about those people who come here. Is the Countess in the castle now?”

“Somewhere about, she is sure to be. She hardly ever leaves it except when she goes on our business. You understand. Before I saw you last night she told me she had brought a splendid girl from Berlin, a ‘quite adorable child widow’ was how she described you! I was to meet you next week. Then when I saw you last night, saw it was you, I got a shock. I was amused, too. It seemed like fate our coming together again and under, if I may put it so, such romantic circumstances. You see I had no idea—”

“Did you tell her you had known me before?”

“Indeed no. And she must not know that we have met before remember that. She must never know—if you still want to escape. But why leave us my dear? Aren’t you happy here? Doesn’t she treat you nicely? She told me she was in love with you, and when she gets

like that—oh, she does a lot, she is extremely kind when she gets like that!”

“Yes, she has been very kind—but I want my liberty And I want to become rich How can I become rich if I am imprisoned here? And you her partner! I wonder why I never guessed Tell me, Isodore, what is behind the high wall, in what you called the ‘bastille,’ besides those girls?”

“Nothing Nothing at all No one else is allowed in that enclosure You will be there now, as you are one of them And there is no escape, none All the girls we bring here are kept in that enclosure and in the north and west wings of the castle They are never allowed out She decoys them, and my work is to pass them on”

“Where do you pass them on to?”

“Wherever they are wanted Some are bought by private individuals Others are sent to many parts of the world to the capitals of Europe and the big cities of the United States and South America and of the Orient A very paying trade, but it needs cunning and cleverness and extreme discretion Also the expenses are heavy We have to pay big hush money to keep certain people quiet Still, it is worth the risk You told me once that the Traffic would appeal to you You wanted to take it up You are clever—would you take it up with us if I helped you with funds and introductions?”

Messaline did not answer Lying on her pillow, she seemed to be reflecting

"You'd make a success of it, I am sure," Isodore went on. "Why not come into partnership with us? We want a third partner, but a suitable partner in secret work of this description is difficult to find. She knows nothing about you, I suppose? Thinks you are a widow—and good!"

"A widow—yes, she knows that. But not 'good.' That she knows too. She found that out very soon."

"I could make the suggestion to her, then say I would find out all about you. I believe she would leap at the idea, and there would be no further need for you to want to escape from here. You would have to travel about the world, stay at the best hotels, meet all the best people—with your peculiar personality and those eyes of yours that would be quite easy. In addition I know you to be discreet. You would stay here a little while to learn how we get to work, who our agents are in different parts of the globe, the names they trade under, their tricks and methods and the people to beware of and the men and women who can be bribed. How about leaving the matter to me?"

Messaline's eyes shone. She put out both her hands from under the bed clothes, and took his.

"You are splendid Isodore!" she exclaimed. "I leave it all to you. And our quarrels in the past, they are forgotten *n'est ce pas?*"



"I forgot them long ago, *chérie*."

Again he leant forward and kissed her passionately on the lips. And while he was doing so the door opened and the Countess came in.

"Ha, you lovers!" she laughed. "Isodore—you! I should have thought that after last night. . . . Darling, you must get up now. Isodore has no doubt told you that your life will be changed now—quite. So I want to present my pretty girls to you. I am sure you'll love them all, and they you—just as they love me," she ended with a laugh.

"I'd like to talk to you," Isodore cut in.

"But by all means. Come I'll see you later, Messaline."

Some moments later Messaline was again alone.

"You know that we have for some time wanted a third partner, with the business grown to its present size," Isodore said when they were in the room which they used as an office.

"And you think that child would suit," the Countess answered promptly.

"What makes you say so?"

"Because we generally think alike, and I have thought so too. I thought so soon after I had come to know her, and since then I have had long talks with her. She looks too young, but I don't think she is, with her exceptional intelligence and her sex appeal and, I should say, tact, and with those hypnotic eyes of hers.

And for one so young her knowledge of the world and her outlook on life is astonishing. Yes, I, too, think she might make a useful partner. I will speak to her to day. If we come to an arrangement she might begin by conducting those three new girls to Reggio—she tells me she talks Italian. They know no language but their own and I think are stupid, so there should be no difficulty with the Government people, she would be their young governess taking them for a pleasure trip. And tell me now—what about last night? How did she take her first experience? What did she say to you about it?”

“Most of it she seemed to have forgotten, the drug was perhaps too strong for her. Yes, I approve of your idea.”

That, Messaline herself told me during the War years, was the gist of the conversation that her friend Isodore told her he had with the Countess that day, and he considered it satisfactory. In his way he was. I gathered to some extent genuinely attached to Messaline, if such a man could be genuinely attached to anybody.

For the time however, Messaline was numbered among the girls of the Countess's seraglio. Between fifteen and twenty there were in all she said and the place was conducted in a most orderly manner. Indeed any visitor coming to the castle and unaware of the use to which the north and west wings of it were put and of what went on there would

never have suspected that the castle was not just the usual type of country residence of a rich woman with no particular aim in life.

The Countess, apparently, was not an unkind woman, though quite soulless—a necessary qualification in a woman of her calling. But with so many girls gathered together under one roof, girls too of varying temperaments and of different nationalities, discipline was necessary, and this was entrusted to two women of rather harsh disposition. Within the walled enclosure were well-kept lawns and gardens where the girls took their daily exercise, but the least sign of rebellion was at once punished by chastisement, which sometimes was unnecessarily severe. There was a room set aside for this purpose from which cries could not penetrate outside, and Messaline soon discovered that this room was close to the bedroom which she had occupied in the other side of the castle. From which she concluded that the cry which she had once heard in the middle of the night must have come from a girl being taken to that room.

Though ostensibly only an ordinary member of the seraglio in this strange clearing-house of human victims, Messaline knew that before long she would be one of its overseers, with power virtually of life and death over the girls, just as the Countess and Isodore had. And so, while mixing freely with her fellow-prisoners, cultivating their friendship and listening to the

stories of their lives and of their capture which they soon began to confide to her, she studied each one carefully, all the while secretly laying plans for her own future.

There were few British girls among them, she discovered. Apparently British girls were the most difficult to decoy, also the precautions taken in England, particularly in London, Liverpool and Manchester, by the police and by private societies to prevent girls being taken out of the country unless certain credentials of the persons in charge of them were forthcoming interfered considerably with the Traffic here. Several however, were Austrian and several were Polish and several were French and German. There were no Italians and no Spanish.

Perhaps what interested her most of all were their stories of their capture. Many had been decoyed and captured by the Countess herself and brought there by the Countess much in the same way that Messaline had been only that Messaline had had only herself to blame. Almost all of them too belonged more or less to the same class. They were daughters of the *bourgeoisie* and had become discontented with their homes and set out in search of adventure and excitement. At dance halls and other places of entertainment they had become acquainted with what appeared to be desirable young men with charming manners and plausible tongues. Some had become engaged to be married to these young men, who had

proceeded to introduce them to their "rich aunt," Countess X. They had been deeply impressed by the Countess, her aristocratic bearing and her obvious wealth. The Countess in return had been most gracious, most hospitable. She had gone so far as to insist on their coming to stay with her at her forest castle, which, she gave them to understand, her 'nephew' would one day inherit. They had come to stay.

Others had been betrayed by those young men, and, on becoming aware of what must soon happen, been terrified of returning to their respectable homes. At their wits' end what to do, they had by some fortunate "accident" just then met a lady who guessing their trouble in a most wonderful way had proved to be kind and sympathetic. She too had loved in her youth—been weak—had fallen. She could indeed sympathise. But the poor child must not despair. Ah she had an idea! Why should not the 'poor child' come and stay with her a little while—stay until it was all over? Indeed she herself would look after the baby. After that—well, there would be time enough then to think. And the 'poor child' had of course seized the opportunity and gone with her to the castle.

These and many similar confidential revelations Messaline listened to with intense satisfaction. How simple it all was—to decoy girls to their fate. Every story told to her was to remain imbedded in her mind for ever. Every

trick revealed to her could of course be played again. Day by day her spirits rose, her ambition grew. She was glad, after all, that she had met the Countess and let her bring her to her castle.

## CHAPTER THE FOURTH

A FORTNIGHT had passed and the expected had happened. Already Messaline had been initiated in some of the mysteries of the nefarious Traffic which she intended to embark upon. The names of some of the big traffickers with whom the Countess and her partner dealt had been confided to her. She was told how and when and where they could be approached, and how to identify them when she saw them. For the whole conduct of affairs was most secretive, the most secretive business in the world, most likely. Care and cunning had to be exercised at every turn, she was assured, that she must never on any account forget. For practically the whole of the civilized world was opposed to the trade, at any rate on the surface, though without the patronage of a section of the civilized world the Traffic would die a natural death. That was the irony of it, the Countess declared. Some of the very people, rich people, people of high social standing, who most loudly condemned the Traffic were among her own patrons. A proportion of the rich folk was financially interested.

There were some ledgers locked in a safe, and these the Countess showed her Excellently kept ledgers—she herself kept them and

none but Isodore and one or two others who profited secretly ever saw them. It was the sight of those ledgers which really astonished Messaline for the first time. For never had it occurred to her that the business was so systematic. She had supposed, always, that large sums of money changed hands, but that those sums should thus be set down in black and white as though the "goods" bought, imported and exported were ordinary merchandise . . .

It was soon after this that the great calamity happened. Leaving Isodore and Messaline in charge, the Countess went away. News had reached her of some fresh importations, this time from Rouen. Girls had been left stranded there by a theatre touring manager who had disappeared with the company's money. An agent of the Countess had hastened to Rouen, negotiated with them and been successful in bringing them to Paris, where he now had them safely housed in Clichy under the pretext that in a few days another, this time a trustworthy, theatre manager would be in Paris and ready to engage them.

Then one morning the dreadful news arrived at the castle while Messaline and Isodore were having *déjeuner* together. At a charity bazaar in Paris two days before, held in a wooden structure erected temporarily, a terrible fire had broken out. The scenes had been heart rending. Blazing tar from the roof had poured down on to the heads of the hundreds of fashionable folk crammed in the



building, a terrific panic had followed, men and women had fought each other and strangled one another in their frantic endeavours to escape. And of the hundreds burned to death only a few were men.

In the list of dead was the name Countess X.\*

For a minute or two Messaline and her companion sat quite still—stunned

Messaline was the first to speak.

"This means," she said as calmly as she could, "that you and I, Isodore, are now sole partners. What relatives had she?"

"None but distant relatives, to whom she never spoke, for naturally, knowing what they did about her, they never even mentioned her name. The bulk of her fortune is in bonds, if that is what you are thinking about, and the bonds are in her safes. I have the keys. I am one of the few people whom she trusted implicitly."

"And who inherits those bonds?"

"I do."

"All of them?"

He nodded

"And I don't mind telling you, Messaline, seeing what we are to each other, that her fortune is prodigious. Her bank accounts are small—she has three accounts. She purposely kept only small sums on deposit in her banks, lest one day misfortune should overtake her

\* In that list of casualties published in the French newspapers, X does not figure as a countess

and her money be confiscated That can be done in Germany and in France in certain circumstances, you know, and she has one bank account in Berlin and one in Paris and one in Vienna ”

“ But there will be claimants to her fortune, surely? She must have left a will Where are those relatives you spoke of? ”

“ She made no will—I know that for a fact—so of course her next of kin will inherit all that she is *known* to possess All that she is not known to possess—this castle, for instance—we owned together so now it becomes mine. That I have in writing ”

He paused

‘ But what a frightful end, Messaline! The justice of God! ’

She shrugged her shoulders and went on with her meal

“ Don’t be ridiculous Isodore Justice! God! You talk like a child Who believes in such things? You remind me of the convent where I was at school, and the stuff they used to teach there ”

It was just eight months after the death of Countess X that I came to know Messaline. My friend young Joseph Tasker who, as I said in my Introductory Note had then recently inherited a fortune of £800 000 had engaged me to travel with him the world over for a period of not less than ten years He was with me when one night in New Orleans’s notorious *bagno* known as Lulu White’s I

became acquainted with Madame Messaline (as I call her).

I shall never forget that night, or the impression the woman made on both of us before we had been long in conversation with her. She was quite young, not more than twenty, and her great speaking eyes of indescribable hue were literally mesmeric; that, indeed, was the impression they made on all with whom she came in contact, women as well as men. At that time, of course, we knew nothing whatever about her, were not even aware that she was engaged in the dreadful Traffic.

Two Englishmen in New Orleans with us became madly enamoured of her—I prefer not to mention their names. For weeks they vied with each other as to which could do most to attract her, and naturally she played her cards skilfully. The presents and the money which she received from them must alone have amounted to a small fortune.

And with her was another woman engaged in the Traffic, who in later years ran two notorious establishments in a street near Bond Street (London). There must still be many who remember her as she appeared daily in the Park, dressed in the period of Marie Antoinette and carrying always a tall, silver headed ebony stick of the same period. After the first year of the Great War, however, she was pronounced to be an undesirable alien and deported. It was said, indeed, that she would have been hounded out of the country long

before, but for the fact that she knew so much about the private lives of many people of high degree in London Society and in political circles that the Government had not the courage to act.

At the time we met Madame Messaline in New Orleans she was arranging to open—this she herself told me when later I became so intimately acquainted with her—two establishments, to be conducted on exactly the lines of Lulu White's place. One was to be started in Buenos Aires, the other in San Francisco.

That was her first big venture, she said. The establishments proved to be immensely attractive, and she went on to open others—in Sacramento, Denver, Detroit, Philadelphia and Chicago. All of them prospered, probably because she introduced certain novelties, and as they prospered so did her ambition grow.

She attributed much of her success, however, to the type of girl in which she specialized. What she called "inanimate" girls she scrapped at once. She aimed at getting girls with brains, she said, and generally she succeeded. Consequently "Messaline" houses were always sought out in preference to all others by the men (and not infrequently the women) of the world who constituted her world-wide *clientèle*.

Also her lures for girls were as remarkable as they were varied. As soon as half-a dozen tricks or traps for decoying fresh victims became known (owing to the watchfulness of

the police and the public warnings of the authorities), she would abandon them and think out a fresh set. And certainly her staff of young men and middle-aged women distributed over the globe, in country places as well as in the big cities, served her faithfully—she made it worth their while to, or they might have blackmailed her.

Her artist's-model trap was a *ruse* which outlasted many. Some of her young men able to paint a little would rent studios in different cities in different countries, and sometimes in villages. Then they would seek out or advertise for models.

Models quickly came along and the "artist" would, so to speak, mark down any who seemed suitable. But he never made love to them. That would have been tactless, particularly in villages, where gossip is always rife. He treated them all with strict decorum. He was invariably the soul of propriety. If a model tried to make love to him or even looked at him in the least affectionately, he gently rebuked her. So people came to believe that to send their daughters or sisters to him was perfectly "safe."

Then one evening he would take one or two of his models to a theatre or some other place of entertainment. There they would all meet, apparently quite accidentally, some friends of his, who would suggest their coming home to a flat or apartment for a chat and some supper. . . .

After that the models would not be seen again. Frantic parents or other relatives would come knocking at his studio door, beside themselves. What had become of their girls? Where had they gone? Where had he last seen them, and when? Had they said where they were going?

The young artist was most distressed. No, indeed, he knew nothing, could tell them nothing. The girls had left him altogether, directly the play was over, saying that they would walk to the corner of the street and catch a bus or a tram. On occasions he had even given Miss This or That money for a cab fare, deeming it unwise for her to walk alone in the streets at night after leaving her companions. Very plausible, very sympathetic always was the young viper.

Other models chiefly those resident in villages, would be taken by the respectable young artist away into some forest to pose as Titania or Aphrodite, or "A Vision of Spring" any subject needing local colour or a background in a leafy glen. They would not be seen again, either. Oh yes they had seemed to be quite well when they had left the painter, saying that they would go home by a short cut. A little excited, one or two of them perhaps.

That was only natural. Certainly, if any of them came to the studio or he heard anything that might lead to the discovery of their whereabouts he would instantly inform the relatives. They could not feel more upset

than he did at the poor girls' disappearance. If there was only one, he would suggest that perhaps she had temporarily lost her memory. That imaginative, highly-strung kind of girl did sometimes. . . .

Thus did Messaline's foul creatures allay any suspicion regarding themselves that might possibly have arisen. Having accomplished his object the "artist" would leave the neighbourhood to do the same thing elsewhere—perhaps in some other country. It was all so exceedingly simple. Yet Madame assured me that many people engaged in the Traffic found it most difficult to get the girls they wanted. Even when they got them they couldn't smuggle them out of the country. That was because they had no initiative, no daring. They feared the police. They dreaded the authorities. The possibility of arrest loomed large in their imagination always. Also the fear of blackmail from their agents. Madame had sometimes gone so far as to turn the tables on an agent who threatened to blackmail her, by herself blackmailing the agent. The agent would one night become acquainted with some stranger—the stranger would ply him with drink—the stranger would suggest his coming with him to his (or her) rooms or hotel for just one final drink—a compromising photograph would be taken without the agent's knowledge . . .

No, it was useless trying to outwit Messaline. None ever had outwitted her, though

plenty had tried. For her cunning and cleverness and foresight were invariably keener than theirs.

It was Messaline who invented the peculiar mirror glass which some readers of this book may possibly have seen. She took out the patent, I believe, and the demand was soon considerable. On one side this glass is a plain reflecting mirror and apparently opaque. On the reverse side it is transparent. Every big *bagno* in Europe has it now. It is seen nowhere else, so far as I am aware.



## CHAPTER THE FIFTH

ANOTHER discovery made by Messaline helped to enable her to outpace most of her rivals

The great difficulty such people always experienced, it seemed, lay in getting their victims from place to place without attracting attention, and from the place of their capture to their ultimate destination either in or out of the country. For obviously a girl in tears or making a "scene" or looking utterly miserable would be liable to arouse the curiosity of strangers, which might lead to inquiries being made. The common but not satisfactory plan of conveying them in closed vehicles meant taking grave risks, and that the procurers always wanted to avoid.

It was left to Messaline to discover a drug which, while ultimately harmless, rendered the victim for some hours dull, listless, virtually in a dream or unconscious of what was going on around her. This drug could be taken or injected, and usually was injected. After that the victim, accompanied by a woman, who sometimes would be dressed as a nurse, would be taken by train quite openly, the "nurse" informing the railway authorities, or anyone else inquisitively inclined, that she was in charge of a mental patient.

By means of that *ruse* alone Messaline exported or imported, according to the country she was in, scores of victims from first to last. For by the time the girls recovered from the effects of the drug they were beyond reach of rescue. They were either in the houses to which they had been consigned, or had been handed over to their private purchasers.

Rich men in all countries purchased girls outright, often for fabulous sums. Others hired girls by the week or month, as you would hire a touring car. And always all payments had to be made strictly in advance, for Madame knew her business—and the morality of her clients.

And those clients—patrons she called them. They were all rich folk, of course, because she herself attended only to the rich: her hireling creatures saw to all the others. They paid her in thousands more often than in hundreds, not francs or even dollars, but pounds. To one wealthy reprobate she sold a virgin, a girl of good family whom she had spirited out of Austria, for £17,000, she swore to me, because, knowing that her potential patron coveted that particular girl beyond all reason, and could afford to pay, she refused to let her go for less. Small wonder, then, that she could afford to pay huge salaries to her agents and accomplices in addition to their expenses for staying in the best hotels in the capitals of Europe and the great cities of North and South America. It was only by staying in such places and osten-

tationously spending money lavishly that they could succeed in becoming intimate with the "right" people, the people who wanted expensive women, as well as young women who might become victims eventually

And there was something so callous, so inhuman, so utterly cold blooded about it all. The way she spoke of her hundreds of victims, as a merchant talks of his merchandise, a wholesale meat importer of his consignments of sheep. Yet she was not wholly heartless. I know that on more than one occasion she gave big donations to charity. She did that in fits and starts. At other times she would be in conceivably penurious. She told me the names of many of her patrons, names honoured and respected, some of them. Others were names of notorious degenerates. Others the names of men and women who eventually were shut up in asylums as sexual maniacs and sadists and worse. There were people among them to be met in good society—British, French, German, Belgian, Austrian, Spanish, Italian. Often I wondered what certain hosts and hostesses would say if they had the slightest inkling that men and women among the guests in their country mansions and their big town houses, sitting with them at meals, consorting with their pure minded young sons and innocent daughters, were people of secretly infamous lives. Jekyll and Hydes. How many there were! How many there probably are still! Yet Europe and America are assumed

to be composed of the world's most civilised nations.

There are folk who shudder at the mere mention of traders in human bodies and souls, in human flesh and blood, "Monsters," they call them, and rightly. But would such monsters exist, would they not quickly be starved out of existence if the demand for human victims were not so great? Useless blaming the traders and trying to stamp them out until you first stamp out their patrons. And how can that be accomplished? It can't and won't be accomplished until vast fortunes can no longer be inherited by men and women of naturally vicious instincts, by male and female sex maniacs, flagellomaniacs, and all the other varieties of degenerates. For monsters like Messaline batten not on the sections of the community that are gross and vulgar and coarse in every way, uneducated and loud mouthed, but on the section which in many respects is cultured and refined paradoxical as that may sound. Thus the vilified new rich—there were plenty before the war—are not to be found in large numbers among the white slave traders' patrons. Nor are the sporting folk, the athletes, the players of manly games and the lovers of out door pursuits. The calm and collected, self restrained, soft-voiced and soulful eyed *habitués* of artistic circles and fashionable drawing rooms—those were the type of people who mostly made up Messaline's wide spread *clientèle*. To look at them you

would never have supposed that beneath their smooth and placid exteriors such horrible fires burned—Etna covered with snow

And married people were by far the worst, "the most paying patrons" was the way she put it. Not satisfied with their wives, or else satiated with them, they fell victims to some beautiful creature they met in an hotel—one of Madame's lures. Sometimes, she declared wives themselves were to blame. Their husbands bored them or did not appeal to them, or were actually abhorred by them. Not infrequently men of debauched habits married women who, being normal, were quickly nauseated when they discovered what their husbands expected and demanded of them. They had never dreamed that men could be like that, and the bare thought soon revolted them.

In other cases the husbands were normal and wanted to be faithful but finding their wives unresponsive and the flesh being weak, and the needs of married life being unfulfilled by their wives

"What a man, the best of men and husbands, can't get at home when he wants it, he will get elsewhere—always—always—always—there is no exception none," I heard Messaline declare emphatically more than once, and I think, seeing and knowing as much as I have seen and known that they were words of wisdom. Yet to how many wives does that idea ever occur? Were they to be told it they would probably say it was quite untrue and all

nonsense, though if afterwards they discovered their husbands to be unfaithful .

There would be no excuse at all for the husband, of course . He wouldn't have a leg to stand on . And if the case came into Court, the jury would uphold the wife's charge of infidelity, for the laws of matrimonial morality must be enforced !

Yes, in spite of her vicious outlook on life, Madame Messaline was a shrewd judge of human nature . The way she could read character from the face, the eyes, the expression, even from the voice, was remarkable . Many of the girls she bought and sold she herself never even saw . She had to do personally only with the very special girls, and those she must in some way have hypnotized, for she could make them do exactly as she pleased . They would be brought one by one into her presence, while she sat on a sort of dais . There she would make them kneel at her feet, put their hands together, then their hands between her knees, and while they so knelt she would make them swear to honour and obey her always and never reveal to any living man or woman any thing that they might see or hear or come to know while in those awful houses .

And she declared to me that not one single girl who had sworn that oath ever broke it . She said they couldn't break it if they tried to, and I believe she spoke the truth .

From first to last I came to know many of her girls in many parts of the world . They

were of many nationalities—French, German, Polish, Austrian, Russian, American, Swedish, Belgian, Mexican, Danish and British. Few of them were British.

And what gorgeously beautiful girls and young women some of them were! I can see them still as I saw them on their first arrival; also as I saw them some years afterwards. They were of all types—every variety of beauty that it is possible to conceive. Tall, short, of medium height, most of them with lovely figures, girls with wonderful hair, fair, dark, auburn, golden, Titian, graceful of bearing, refined of speech many of them, with little hands and tapering fingers and well shaped finger-nails and slim ankles—none could accuse Madame Messaline of not knowing her business from A to Z.

And they all had to possess some degree of intelligence; they must have imagination or they would be of no use to her, she used to declare. A man didn't want a woman, however lovely physically, if she had no imagination, no animation, no *jote de vivre*, no passion. So many of her *confrères* overlooked that fact, she said. A "cold" woman, a girl devoid of passion yet beautiful to look upon was an anachronism. That instinctive, intimate knowledge of her patrons' needs was probably one of the chief secrets of her extraordinary success; one of the reasons why men sought out her establishments in preference to those of owners of similar places; why immensely

rich men almost invariably came to consult Messaline concerning what they used in their inhuman way to refer to as their "requirements"

Gorgeously beautiful women and girls I have called them That was when one saw them first There were cities I found myself in a second time, when some years had passed where I had first seen those lovely girls and women

I know of nothing in this world more terrible than the sight of a victim of the type I have described when she has passed a few years in bondage The creature that was a thing of perfect loveliness has in that short time become almost odious to look upon The smile that tantalised your lips has become a leer The laugh that was so musical grates upon the ear The hair that shone like burnished metal has grown dull The look in the eyes recalls some horrid nightmare Often the very expression of the face is almost unrecognizable

When I saw them again they were in lower grade establishments, some in places of the lowest grade the sort you find in the back streets of Tunis and towns of that class

"How long do your girls last? I asked Messaline one day

"From eight to ten years," she replied at once "After six years they begin to fail, even when free from disease We transfer them then to the lower rate establishments, where they last another few years—some I



have known to be productive for twelve years, but that only seldom happens."

"And after that?"

"We get rid of them."

"What happens to them? Where do they go?"

"God knows. It doesn't concern me. Into the gutter, I suppose, some into the river, in some countries, judging by the number of bodies that are dragged out of the rivers from time to time."

She had looked me straight in the eyes as she said all that. Those queer, still psychic eyes of hers that years ago had attracted men and women almost irresistibly, yet possessed some sort of uncanny power. Had I not seen her sitting there so calmly and heard her say what she had just said I could not have believed it possible that any human being could be so utterly inhuman. To her the girls she trafficked in were literally human live-stock, "productive" for eight or ten years and occasionally for twelve. At the end of that time, worn out in soul and body, riddled with the loathsome disease, perhaps, suffering in all probability untold agony, they were flung into the streets to die slowly in misery or quickly end their misery in the river. What can their thoughts have been in the final years of their existence? Did they ever think of their early years, of their possibly happy homes and of parents who probably had loved them? Of the train of events that had led to their undoing

and final degradation? Eight years. It seemed such a short time. But most likely a merciful Providence so clouded their poor brains that during their few remaining years or months they were unable to think at all.

It was during the war, while I was assisting the A.P.M. at a French base, that she told me all that I have set down in the last few pages. We were together in her extravagantly furnished flat, sharing a bottle of wine. All sorts of thoughts crowded my brain as I sat there, but suddenly her voice brought me to earth again.

She was refilling my glass.

"Well, Monsieur," she was saying, "what more can I tell you? There is plenty more to tell, you know, and—and, yes, all the years you have known me you have been kind to me, you and those friends of yours of the old days. Ah, those old days! How happy they were! How happy we might all be still, but for this *guerre affreuse*."

## CHAPTER THE SIXTH

OF course much that she told me it would be undesirable to repeat—is not fit to repeat. She related almost incredible stories of the notorious procuress, Regine R——, whom she had at one time known intimately, and had always hated—why, I could never make out. This woman, too, had traded over most of the world, but her headquarters had been in Vienna. Apparently she had succeeded in bribing almost everybody worth bribing, including a considerable section of the Vienna police. In most of the capitals of Europe she opened what purported to be dressmakers' shops for women of fashion, and dresses were actually made and sold in them. But behind it all was a vast criminal organization, which included not infrequently the blackmailing of rich customers, some of whom in the end committed suicide, while others she succeeded in inducing to disappear voluntarily and consent to be exported to Brazil, where they became the slaves of the "kaften," as such traders in Brazil are called. So great was her power, indeed, that in Buenos Aires she had actually bribed two prominent judges to acquit five notorious traders whose guilt had been proved twice over, though in that city the sentence on conviction for trading

in girls is six years' imprisonment and confiscation of all property

' Measures to suppress our traffic,' Messina said, ' have little or no effect, except perhaps in England, where your regulations are very thorough as I have told you and bribery is difficult except amongst the *canaille* and what is called in Germany the *luftmenschen* that is the men without money who live by their wits and will take up anything. It was thought that the great Conference for the Suppression of the Traffic in Girls that was held in Berlin, and two years later in Frankfurt on Main would crush us out of existence but we hardly noticed its effects if it had any. Then people like Dr Rosenack Berta Pappenheim and Dr Sera Rabinowitsch have organized public meetings and worked very hard privately to stop the export in particular of Galician girls—the demand for Galician girls has always been considerable. Do you know that a few years ago there were over twenty thousand traders in girls in the State of New York alone and thousands of cadets? '

' Cadets? ' I said

Why, yes. Cadets are what we generally call the handsome young men we employ as decoys. There are other names for them as well '

But where do you find handsome young men who are willing to act as decoys—that is to become ' cadets ? '

She laughed

"Find them?" she answered "There is not much difficulty about finding them. The difficulty lies in selecting from amongst the many applicants the young men who appear to be best suited for the work."

"Yes, but how do you discover them? I mean, how do they come to know they are wanted for what you call 'work' of that kind? You can't advertise for them."

"Can't we?"

We were in her *appartement*, and she got up and went over to a writing-table and unlocked a drawer. Presently she came back with a handful of newspaper cuttings in various languages.

"So we can't advertise for cadets—or for anybody else we may want! Look through these, and you will see you are mistaken"

I spread the cuttings out on the table at my elbow, and began to read them. They certainly were cunningly worded. I copied a few of them and here they are. The majority are translated from French, German, Spanish or Italian, but some had appeared in newspapers printed in English:—

"A cultured, good-looking young man is required at once to fill a congenial post. No premium and good salary"

"A lady of artistic temperament wishes to correspond with a young man similarly interested"

"Advertiser gives lessons in psychic matters, psychometry, thought transference, etc."

"A well-placed, elderly gentleman desires friendly intercourse with a young man"

"A young lady, a stranger to the town, desires a lady friend. Apply by letter to 'Lesbos,' at the office of this paper."

"A young Englishwoman gives stimulating instruction. Write L.L. This paper."

"Masoch. Who is interested in this? Write 'Onus,' Poste Restante."

There were dozens of advertisements cut out of newspapers and all were worded more or less in this way.

"But do not some people answer such advertisements in all good faith, and quite unsuspectingly, and are they not taken aback when they discover the truth, and what they are wanted for?" I said.

"No, because we feel our way carefully the first time they call to be interviewed. If they are obviously applicants to whom any hint of what we want them for would be—what is the word? Tell me."

"Abhorrent?" I suggested.

"Yes, that is the word—abhorrent—they are told they would not suit, or that the post is already filled, and they go. But lots and lots answer the advertisements knowing well that they will be wanted for something not quite—well, you know. Even when they do not suspect at first (we can tell pretty well by the way they look and talk if they are likely to suit),

they soon do suspect when we talk of what they will be paid, and—ah, then ! You have a saying in England—‘money talks’ That is true And it talks so loud to these young men that they generally hear it and are glad to get the posts no matter what they are told they will have to do ”

Mention has already been made of some of the methods which she and others employed to secure girls for their *maisons de tolerance*, to give such places their polite French designation, but at one time and another she described other *ruses* In Germany and in Austria a particularly odious trick was frequently resorted to until the police in Vienna discovered the truth and warned the police in other Continental countries

The confederates in the *ruse* in preparation would first of all mark down their victim She would be a good looking “suitable” and obviously unsuspecting girl whose movements they had gradually come to know They had noticed that on certain days she went out into the town almost always alone

These confederates two in number, were generally women, but sometimes they would be men dressed as women One afternoon the girl walking unsuspectingly along the pavement would find a woman walking beside her and keeping pace with her If she increased her pace the woman increased hers If she began to walk more slowly the woman walked more slowly, but kept always beside her If

the girl spoke to the peculiar stranger, the latter paid no attention

A little way farther on the girl would find a woman on the other side of her, too, pursuing the same tactics. And wherever she went they went, always one on each side. She might go into a shop. They would go in too. Or into a restaurant for lunch. They would lunch at a table near. She got up to go out, and they followed her out.

Thoroughly alarmed, she might go to a telephone. If that happened they would gently interfere to prevent her telephoning. Then if she lost her head, became hysterical or made a scene, they would explain to anybody who might inquire what was the matter, that the poor girl was not right in her head and that they were nurses in charge of her. After that the more she might protest and the greater the scene she might create, the more apparent to strangers was her "madness." Even police officers were hoodwinked in this way, and when at last in desperation the unfortunate victim, beside herself through terror, rushed for a taxi, her two "nurses" would get in after her, often the taxi she jumped into was one that had been following near by all the time, driven by a third accomplice.

After that she would not be seen again.

Another plan was for a female decoy, or sometimes a good looking youth dressed and disguised as a middle aged woman, to frequent the cheap restaurants patronized by work girls



and others in their lunch hour. Within a week or two the decoy would succeed in becoming friendly with some of the girls, and soon afterwards, by talking tactfully and impressively, gain the confidence of any who seemed likely to suit. A little later she would thrill them with news of several "splendid openings" she had just heard of, pleasant and much better jobs than those they had. These imaginary jobs were of various kinds, but more often than not they had to do with the stage, which as the decoy well knew, possesses an irresistible attraction for most girls of that class.

Generally they would fall into the trap at once, and soon the woman would tell them she had arranged for them to be interviewed by a very important *entrepreneur*. This person would receive them in the friendliest way imaginable, and, after a little preliminary talk, engage them all at quite good salaries. A week or so later they would set out, after being put through one or two fake rehearsals.

On their arrival in the town where they were to make their first appearance he would come to them in a state of great agitation. Something unforeseen and terrible had happened. There had been a big mistake and the theatre had been let to somebody else! Or else his "recalling partner" had decamped with the money. Or the leading lady had telegraphed that she was ill and unable to appear, and there was nobody fit to take her place. Always it would be some pathetic story of unlooked for

misfortune calculated to excite the girls sympathy and make them want to help him in any way they could

Then suddenly an idea would strike him. In some town in another country a friend of his a theatrical manager to whom he had once done a good turn he might be able to help one of his theatres might be disengaged he would wire to him yes, and this manager friend of his had a wife who would exactly fit the rôle his leading lady was to have played so the girls must cheer up there might still be hope *provided they would consent to go into some other country*

In the evening he would come back to them flourishing a telegram just received from his friend. He could have the theatre and all was going to be well. Everything was arranged satisfactorily.

At the railway station at the town in the other country where they arrived always in the middle of the night taxis were waiting to convey them to their hotel. Into these the girls would tumble with their bits of hand baggage laughing and chattering, all in the highest spirits.

And they would be driven away.

Then the agent would return to head quarters in the country he had come from and draw his extra honorarium.

I could fill pages with details of this kind that Messaline supplied me with from first to last particulars of the almost endless tricks

and artifices which were—many of them probably are still—resorted to by procurers, male and female their agents and their decoys to get girls into their power for immoral purposes. But the foregoing will suffice. Once entrapped the victims had practically no chance of ever escaping. And even as she pointed out, if they could have escaped what would have become of them? In the great majority of cases their relatives and their friends would on realising what had happened namely, that they had actually been inmates of a house of ill fame, have turned their backs on them refused to admit them into their homes again treated them as outcasts.

"Yet in spite of all I did lose a few of my girls' Messaline said one day, as an after thought

"Really? But how? I asked

She grinned

"They got married. Oh yes a few of them get married. Men are like that sometimes. They come in for an hour to amuse themselves meet a girl who attracts them in more ways than the one fall in real love with her, agree to pay for her release and take her away. And though you may not believe me some of those girls have made extremely good wives and remained absolutely faithful."

Then she bent forward and whispered two names into my ear. They were names of women well known in London Society some years ago wives of men of social standing

Yet I feel sure there cannot be a single man or woman among even their intimate friends who has so much as an inkling of the truth

Red lamp houses, as they are called, are common in every capital in and out of Europe, but Messaline told me of many other signs which indicate that this or that house is a "house of accommodation" Windows curtained with chintz of a particular pattern is one indication A small pane of red, blue, green or yellow glass over the entrance door is another sign And the colour of the glass also has its special meaning For instance one colour means that only men are admitted to that house Another that only women frequent it Another that the house is patronized by a particular type of pervert Another that obscene pictures and pornographic literature can be obtained there, and so on What are called respectable folk of course know nothing of all this But the men and women belonging to certain sets and circles, the people of habitually vicious lives recognize the signs at once, no matter in what country they are displayed

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTH

DURING the War, when so many of the *maisons de tolérance* were out of bounds for French and British troops alike, while others, known to be "unhealthy," as the authorities delicately expressed it when women in them were believed to be diseased, were shut down, new and original "friendly signals," to use the Tommies' term for such signs, came into use.

These were mostly bottles, flower-pots, china ornaments, children's toys, etc., placed in not too conspicuous positions on window-sills. Two flower-pots meant one thing. Three flower-pots another. Some of the signs were more obvious. In spite of much that has been said and written to the contrary, many of our men would have nothing to do with the women who during those years of strain and stress tried so hard to get every franc they could out of us. They remembered their wives and daughters. But of course there were others. . . . All these signs were well-known to the troops, and when I asked Messaline how they came to be so well-known, she shrugged her shoulders.

"When you have a commercial commodity to dispose of," she replied in French, "you advertise it, don't you? Well, we advertise

too," and she produced a copy of a printed leaflet which she said was distributed amongst the troops whenever possible, soon after they had landed.

She and others like her were responsible, too, for the distribution at *cafés* and *estaminets*, and in places of amusement at the bases, of gold and silver pasteboard medallions bearing a name and address—nothing else. But everybody knew that the address was that of a *bagnio*, and that the gold medallions bore the addresses of the most expensive *maisons de tolérance*, those which touted for officers only. The War more than quadrupled her profits, she declared; yet she hated it and longed for the day when all that hideous and stupid massacreing, as she rightly called it, would be over.

"*Comme ils sont bêtes, mais comme ils sont bêtes*" she never tired of exclaiming each time news came of another long casualty list.

Her girls and women loved the English but disliked the Americans and the Australians, she would say sometimes. The Americans and Australians were free enough with their money, but "*si brusque*" The English were "*gentilshommes*" But as it was to her interest to keep well in favour with us, I daresay she thought it tactful to express views of that sort.

Much that she told me about her pre-war patrons was illuminating, for until then I had never suspected that old gentlemen could be

so unpleasantly immoral. She said that she "supplied the needs" of quite a lot of outwardly respectable old men, whose friends would have been amazed had they suspected the truth. And the risks they ran, some of those dear old gentlemen! They actually wrote to her direct from their homes, on embossed stationery, and signed their true names to their letters! The idea of possible black mail apparently never occurred to them.

She showed me a bunch of such letters. One came from a country gentleman living in the midlands, a man well known to me by name. He had a wife and several children and he wrote to Messaline telling her quite frankly that he wanted a woman who could act as governess to his children but would at the same time secretly be his mistress—she would live in the house of course, under the same roof as his wife!

Another man of the same type, wrote that as his wife disliked matrimonial relations he had arranged with her that a woman should be engaged as housekeeper who in point of fact would be his mistress. He and his wife were excellent friends he added and it had been her idea that this arrangement should be made! There were fortunately no children in that household.

What Messaline did not know about women their peculiarities their vagaries their eccentricities their likes and their dislikes, their weaknesses and their failings their vices their

characters, their inmost thoughts, cannot be worth knowing. And she knew, if possible, even more about men.

The women to beware of, the most immoral women she always declared, were the quiet, reserved, demure, apparently shy women and girls. The noisy hoydens, the women with a loud laugh, the apparently bold women, the women who liked it to be thought they were wicked and "no better than they ought to be," the women who loved *risqué* stories, were generally more or less blameless, "perhaps rather flirtatious, fond of being kissed," but there it ended.

And in confirmation of this she told me stories of many "quiet" women with whose private lives she had been intimately acquainted because she had numbered them among her patrons. Some had come regularly to her houses, those houses of hers which corresponded with men's *bagnios*. They would come often during the afternoons, when their husbands or their parents or other relatives believed them to be shopping or visiting friends. There was a private entrance to these houses, generally through a confectioner's shop, the confectioner being her paid agent. Consequently it was impossible for any friends of these patrons to suspect anything. The patron went into the confectioner's ostensibly to make ordinary purchases. If when she came out through the private door some friend of hers chanced to be in the shop, also making pur-



chases but unaware of the use to which the premises were put, naturally the patron had been into the back room to mend a rent in her frock, make her face up, wash her hands, anything.

"Perhaps the most extraordinary woman of that type I ever knew," Messaline said one day, "was a woman whom I will call Mathilde, though that was not her name.

"She was the managing director of a big department store in the town of X., in Austria. A tall, handsome woman, with a perfect figure and a fine presence, all who had to do with her admitted that she was an excellent woman of business. She was very reserved, almost shy, calm, collected, you would have thought it impossible to excite her. She dressed well, but never showily. She ate and drank sparingly, and never smoked. Her employers held her in high esteem, and rightly, for I doubt if they could have found any woman, or man for that matter, better or as well suited to hold so responsible a post. Had anybody so much as hinted that Mathilde was not the very soul of modesty and respectability, the allegation would have brought him (or her) into utter ridicule.

"Yet the moment she found herself alone with any man, old or young, or even a boy in his teens, she became completely transformed. On the instant she was a creature of quite uncontrollable passion, an entirely different being. And when she was in that state there

was no resisting her. If opportunity offered, she would strip herself completely. Then when she had done she would beg and implore her victim, often with tears in her eyes, not to say anything to anybody, not to betray her, vowing that she could not help herself—which was the truth. And for years none of her victims did give her away. Her employers knew all about it because she had behaved in that way with more than one of her directors, but they kept their own counsel. In spite of her monomania she was too good a manageress to lose.

"She lived until well over sixty, and suffered from her strange affliction right up to the end. Yet in every other respect she was absolutely sane, and until the last years of her life continued to be—except when alone with a man—reserved, demure, shy. As I have said, she was the most amazing woman I have ever known—and I have known a few amazing women!"

A fruitful source of revenue in her houses, and in the places of entertainment of the *tingel-tangel* type which she opened at her own expense as her profits rolled up, was the sale of intoxicants. In the houses the cheapest champagne was sold at two and three guineas a bottle—the price depended on the customer and what he looked like and if he seemed willing and in a position to pay the higher price—and whisky and cognac at two guineas a bottle (this before the war). It was

Messaline to whom the idea first occurred of providing the floor corners of the private boxes in her "theatres," as she grandiloquently termed them, with a sink which was hardly noticeable and down which the girls who brought men into these boxes would surreptitiously pour the liquor they had made their men buy for them. Then the men would order more, and keep on ordering more, believing that they and the girls had drunk all that had gone before; and, on all drink thus bought, the girls would be paid commission.

Soon the Midway Flaisaunce on Market Street in San Francisco, the Rocket in Sacramento, and the Adler Lounge in Denver City adopted the same plan, and so remunerative did it prove that in a short time disreputable places of entertainment of that class, all over the United States and in parts of Europe, too, provided their private boxes with corner sinks. It was said that in some of these places the liquor thus poured away ran down a spout into a tank and was re bottled and sold as cocktails, but Messaline assured me that, so far as she knew, that was never done anywhere. The sinks have now been abolished probably everywhere.

Which reminds me that in a place called by our men "Hill Sixty," in Rouen, during the War, every girl and woman allowed to enter had to deposit with the manageress a sum equivalent to their commission on the sale of fifteen four-franc drinks. After that it became

their business to wheedle the customers most of whom were officers into ordering at least fifteen drinks, and of course as many more as possible. There were private rooms at the back into which couples could retire when they wanted to

Hundreds of women and girls came under Madame Messaline's "management," as she put it during the many years she was engaged in the horrible Traffic. They were of all nationalities, of all sorts and kinds and of almost every class. Apart from the girls lured away from their homes there were many who came voluntarily. They came for various reasons. Some actually believed that the life of professional immorality must be full of excitement—an illusion quickly dispelled. Some came because naturally vicious. Some because their husbands in some cases their parents had driven them on to the streets to earn money for them and to escape that life of misery they sought shelter in a Messaline house where the inmates were said to be well fed and kindly treated. Some were forced into it through starvation. Some because their children starved, and by any means in their power they must get food for them. Curiously enough indeed paradoxical as it may seem not infrequently Messaline paid for food and lodging for the children of such unfortunates.

In addition sometimes the daughters of well-to-do people and of people of good family and of what are called Society people would

secretly call to interview Messaline. They would ask her all sorts of questions in strict confidence, and invariably, she said, she respected their confidence. After these interviews they would pay her large sums of money and she would introduce to them "desirable" young men of the type they had confided to her they would like to meet. Then secret meeting would take place between these people thus introduced, often at private houses controlled by Messaline, and never did any relatives, friends or acquaintances of the young women suspect that the latter were not absolutely virtuous.

I once asked her if any of the clergy ever came to her houses. She looked serious, hesitated, and answered:

"Only very rarely. For one thing, most of the clergy cannot afford to pay my fees; naturally, too, they cannot risk entering a common, cheap house, even when not in clerical dress. Apart from that, though the clergy are only human, like the rest of mankind, my belief is that for the most part they are not immoral, especially the Roman Catholic priests. Young men studying to be priests have come to me sometimes, but, on being ordained, have changed their mode of life. No," she added with a touch of unconscious humour, "I look on the clergy, taking them all round, as my worst patrons."

On the other hand her best patrons, she said, were men over fifty—from fifty up to any age.

Possibly because they knew their years were numbered they seemed to want to squeeze every ounce of pleasure out of life before the end came. Also the majority of the men of that age had plenty of money, and that was "the only way they could spend it to advantage." This she said quite seriously. Indeed when she talked in this way, it was at times difficult to believe that she was not discussing ordinary amusements or entertainments.

In New York, Philadelphia, Brussels and Berlin she owned "studios" where artists, some of them talented artists, were retained to produce "certain" pictures and photographs. For these she assured me there is a big demand the world over in spite of the severe sentences meted out to vendors and purchasers alike if caught and convicted which apparently they seldom are. In Paris, curiously enough, she found it would be too dangerous to open such a studio. Nor had she one in London though she knew of one near Goodge Street and believed that others existed. The pictures were disposed of through the medium of street walkers who acted as agents, also they were sold secretly by some hairdressers and by some hotel and club hall porters. Both men and women bought them and generally elderly people. In some of the hospitals for consumptives they were eagerly sought by a proportion of the patients, friends of the patients would smuggle them in and she had known one hospital nurse who had

acted as an agent. In some of the foreign conservatoires there were always girls who were anxious to obtain such pictures and photographs, also pornographic literature. But always the utmost care had to be exercised by those who sold and those who bought anything of the kind. Male and female detectives were especially employed by the police in all countries to discover whence such stuff came—that is to say, where it was produced, and who was buying or selling it. Consequently large sums had to be spent on keeping what she called “tiresome people” quiet.

And the artists? Who were the people who thus prostituted their talent? Well, one knew how desperately poor many clever artists were. Those she herself employed had all, she believed, been driven by poverty to do work of that kind. She did not think there was one amongst them who would not at once have abandoned such “picture work,” had he or she been able to afford to. Oh yes, there were women as well as men turning out pictures and producing photographs of that kind. Did I think it very dreadful? Was I shocked? She laughed and shrugged her shoulders and repeated her favourite aphorism—“If you want to kill the supply you must first of all kill the demand.”

She had, in addition to her specimens of pictures and “literature,” a remarkable collection of sexual *belles lettres*. Some of the latter volumes were first editions and very

valuable, particularly as such books cannot, for the most part, be bought in the open market, though the ordinary obscene photographs and cheap pornographic literature are still exposed for sale in some countries.

Among the *belles lettres* volumes were Jouy's "*Galerie des Femmes*"; Gautier's "*Mademoiselle de Maupin*" in its original edition; the first and unrevised edition of Zola's "*Nana*"; Verlaine's "*Les Hommes*" and "*Les Amis*"; Whitman's "*Leaves of Grass*"; Pernauhm's "*Ercole Tomei*" and "*Die Infamen*"; Liane de Pougy's notorious "*Idylle Sapphique*"; Prime-Stevenson's "*Irenaeus*"; Dilsner's "*Jasminblute*"; Alfred de Musset's "*Gamiani*", some of the works of Mirabeau; Thomas Rowlandson's illustrated works; Cleland's "*Lyndamine*" and "*Fanny Hill*"; Diderot's "*The Nun*"; and a whole set of the Marquis de Sade's erotic volumes.

There were books of this nature by comparatively modern authors, too, which had been presented to her by their writers and bore suitable inscriptions in the authors' handwriting, with their autograph signatures. From which I gathered that those writers must have been on terms of intimacy with Messaline, though probably they knew only half the truth about her—or less. For indeed I honestly believe that I alone—excepting, of course, her colleagues and the creatures she paid to carry out her instructions—knew the whole story of her vile life during her lifetime. And I, of



course, should not have known it but for the unforeseen chance which necessitated my meeting her frequently during part of the War period

The first time she had visited the Countess's castle in the middle of the German forest she had, as I have already said, set her heart on one day owning it. And not many years passed before she did come practically to own it. But she made no changes to speak of. The "bastille" (the walled in compound) remained and, as in the Countess's lifetime, the castle continued to be a sort of clearing house for what Messaline called "women of quality." The common women, the "cheap" women women and girls of lower grade, were never sent there

## CHAPTER THE EIGHTH

It was, I suppose, only natural that on various occasions we should discuss the subject of matrimony, particularly matrimony in its relation to free love, or perhaps I should say free passion. I did not wholly agree with her peculiar views on this question though some of them were sound.

Messaline was emphatic in her contention for instance that only from five to ten per cent. of the married men in civilised countries the world over are faithful to their wives. Yes she admitted that middle-class husbands, the husbands of the *bourgeoisie* were probably the most faithful as a whole, but that did not dispel the fact that the great majority even of the *bourgeoisie* were unfaithful. Not habitually, perhaps. She would not go so far as to say that. But intermittently. Yet they were none the worse for being so—in her opinion. Men were polygamous by nature. They always had been and always would be. And you couldn't change nature. Men needed variety from time to time—all men. And she considered that most husbands were all the better for an occasional change. They loved their wives none the less because once in a way they turned their attention away from home,

particularly when they had been married some years and the "novelty of one wife" had to some extent worn off. Such men remained just as good husbands, just as good fathers. They looked upon their outside *amours* merely as a sort of temporary relaxation.

There were few big cities in any country where she had not known that some of the leading citizens were among her patrons. Of course none of their friends had the smallest idea that such citizens were not men of the strictest moral rectitude. Some of them would visit the same establishment regularly once a week and always on the same day of the week. Some once a fortnight or once every three or four weeks. They would have a fixed hour, too, and a particular girl or woman awaiting them on their arrival—always the same one, and only very rarely did anybody least of all their wives become aware of these visits.

With the *roués*—they were by no means all old—included in her *clientèle*, she seemed to have little patience. They would come several times a week, and sometimes more than once a day, and they grumbled always and were never satisfied. And they wanted so much and they would haggle over the fees, and sometimes they arrived in a state of intoxication and were inclined to be noisy and quarrelsome. They had no control over themselves, none. Also they were disagreeable in other ways and almost always her inmates detested

them and hated having anything to do with them

The patrons most appreciated by her girls and women were the boys, lads in their late teens and early twenties. They were easily satisfied and never gave trouble. And generally they were polite, they would, many of them, "address my women as though they were duchesses," and even such women appreciated courtesy. Besides youth was the time for love, wasn't it? Sometimes schoolboys came along. They would creep in after dark generally looking shy and shamefaced and as a rule they had very little money. However, she always "obliged them" when she could. The people she much enjoyed extorting money from were the *roues* just spelt on about. As often as possible, too, she would insist on their buying champagne, for which she charged them the highest prices possible.

Now and again women would seek admittance to the men's houses but in several countries it was illegal to admit women to those houses—there were other houses, specially set aside for women. Still they occasionally succeeded in gaining admission by means of some *ruse*. One of their commonest tricks was to wear men's clothes. Then even if the *madame* saw through their disguise she could, if charged, plead that the women had deceived her.

Asked which she considered to be the most immoral cities in the world, she replied without

hesitation—Philadelphia, Buenos Aires, San Francisco, Marseilles and London. No, she would not include Paris. Paris bore an evil reputation which it did not deserve. But she was tempted to include Madrid. Perverts seemed to be about equally distributed over the whole of the civilized world. Amongst savages, and uncivilized races generally, sexual pervers were less plentiful. When such races became civilized, however, often they grew depraved in several other ways.

During the War, if an officer disappeared—and many officers disappeared then, apart from those who were reported missing—the brothels, the *maisons de tolérance*, the *maisonnettes d'amour*—call them what you like, they have many designations—were among the first places where inquiries were made. That was one of the reasons why the various A P M.'s had to keep in touch with such places. And generally it was in such places that the first news of the officer missing would be obtained.

Messaline herself had an extraordinary memory for faces. Though hundreds of officers visited her houses, many of them only once, when the features and general appearance of a missing officer were described to her she almost always hit upon the right man if she had ever seen him. On more than one occasion a missing officer was found to have died in her house. One at least committed suicide in it. When I say her house, I mean

the house of ill fame of which she herself was the *patronne* or *madame*—probably the biggest house of its sort in France

She told me that until the War broke out she had not herself acted as *madame* to a single house, at least not for many years. Prior to that she had been merely the brain controlling her network of houses spread over the whole of the civilized world. 'But when this hideous war broke out and I saw everybody trying to help, I felt that I, too, must do what you call 'my bit,' ' she said with a laugh. She had a sense of humour up to a point.

If she spoke the truth and I feel sure that most of what she told me was true for it was to her advantage then to keep strictly to the truth she and the man in the castle in Germany who had taken her into partnership were among the first to turn cinematography to their advantage. That they did in the opening years of this century, when they "experimented" with it in San Francisco and in Buenos Aires.

Exactly how they "experimented" I cannot well describe here but the reader's imagination may help him to guess. From the first these experiments were a success as all else that the woman touched seemed to be and soon operations were rapidly extended. Within four years secret cinema displays of this kind were being given in all the capitals and many of the big cities of Europe as well as in India, China, Japan and the Malay States. They did not become general in North and South America

until later. And they increased her fortune enormously.

Many of the stories which she told me concerning these secret cinematograph displays were interesting up to a point. The majority had what may be called a foreign "setting" and concerned chiefly the doings of people engaged in this secret trade abroad. But one incident which occurred nearer home, will, I think, bear relating.

A tall, very handsome young Englishman of good family, having squandered a considerable fortune on hectic living, was obliged to fly the country to escape his creditors. With his last hundred pounds he arrived in Paris, where he put up at a good hotel, meaning to have a final fling and then—well, he had no idea—the river, perhaps . . . or a dose of poison . . . or a friendly bullet. . . .

He was that sort.

Whilst dining one night at an expensive restaurant, he noticed a very lovely, beautifully dressed woman looking at him rather hard; and when presently their eyes met, she smiled. Towards the end of dinner she came over to him and asked if she might have her coffee with him.

After that, as he had expected, she suggested his going home with her.

"Now look here," he said bluntly, "I am going to be quite frank with you. Probably you think I am well off. I daresay I look well off, because I have been But at this moment

I am broke I have less than fifty pounds in the world, and when that is spent—oh, God knows I suppose I shall go down into the gutter like so many others I am telling you all this because I don't want you to waste your time So perhaps now you will go away"

She did not answer for a minute, but kept her eyes fixed on him At last she smiled

"Poor boy," she exclaimed sympathetically, "but that is really too bad I confess I did not think you were in that broke condition, as you say, you do not look it But why should you think I want your money? Who and what do you think I am? You offend me—you offend me very much I ask you to come home with me I do not ask for money I do not want your money If you had thousands I still should not want any Tell me—do you owe so very much?"

He hesitated, then answered "Over a thousand pounds"

Presently, when the waiter came, she insisted, in spite of the young man's protests, on paying his bill as well as her own

"Now come with me," she said as she rose

Bewildered he followed her out Drawn up beside the kerb a big limousine with two men in livery awaited her She stepped in and he got in after her

For over half an hour the car rolled rapidly along Paris was miles behind and they were far out in the country when the young man saw that they had just driven into what



appeared to be a park. A minute later the car stopped.

Servants in livery opened the door of the mansion. It was an imposing-looking old country house, magnificently furnished and apparently as well appointed. Later supper was served—supper for two only. And soon after supper his mysterious hostess conducted him upstairs and showed him into an elaborate bedroom with exceptionally powerful electric lights.

While he was at breakfast alone next morning, in the dining-room, a rather bulky envelope was brought to him. On it was written :

“Please do not open this before you are back in Paris. Good bye—and thank you.”

After breakfast he found a car awaiting him. The driver said he had been instructed to convey him back to his hotel in Paris.

Still completely mystified, but without worrying about that, he pushed the envelope into his pocket unopened. Later, in the privacy of his room at the hotel, he tore it open.

It contained English treasury notes to the value of £1000. There was no letter or message of any sort.

More than ever puzzled, and feeling that this windfall was far more than he deserved, he tucked the notes away in his wallet and went out for a walk and to think over all that had happened. But the more he tried to solve the problem, the more intricate it became.

Months passed, and the incident had almost faded from his mind. He was back in London for the £1000 had enabled him to satisfy most of his creditors, when one evening some friends of his suggested their going to see a "queer" French show that had just been put on at a secret house near Gooch Street.

There was the usual small French orchestra, hidden away, and as the young man and his friends sat in the pitch darkness of their stall box, near other boxes whose occupants they could not see and who could not see them, two films of indifferent merit were shown as preliminaries to the new and important French "production."

Hardly had the curtains parted for this, than the scene, a big bedroom struck the young man as being strangely familiar. A moment later the door of the room opened and a woman came in.

*It was the mystery woman he had met in Paris!*

Then the whole truth flashed in upon him. He knew that in less than a minute a man would follow her in and that man would be himself! And he knew that after that

Almost beside himself with horror, he sprang up told his friends he had forgotten something and would be back in a minute made his way out of the dark room and hurried out of the place.

So that was the reason he had been paid £1000!

## CHAPTER THE NINTH

APPARENTLY few inmates of the high-class houses of ill-fame become insane. According to Messaline, this is due to the care that is taken of their health by the *madame* or whoever may have charge of them, to their lives of ease, and to the regularity of their lives. Often, when they have passed on to the lower-grade houses they become debilitated, worn out physically before their time, which, as already stated, varies from eight to ten years. But their brain is seldom affected—unless they are diseased.

Yet, apart from the nature of their calling, their mode of life is what most of us would consider to be unhealthy. They seldom go out of doors, they take little or no exercise, though allowed to eat and drink only in moderation, their food consists largely of sugary products, and of course they sleep only during the day.

Some have succeeded in eventually rising out of their horrible existence, but only to start similar establishments. With the exception of the few who are bought out of bondage for one reason or another, they all remain slaves until of no further use. Instances are on record of children being born in such places, but when that has happened the children have generally

been kept there and brought up to the life of infamy

Mention has been made of the fact that members of the clergy rarely visit such houses with evil intent. Messaline told me, however, that from time to time Roman Catholic priests, generally elderly men, have come to her houses in disguise and tried to induce some of her women to change their mode of life—in other words, to repent and reform.

*The priests have known, of course, that the women could not escape, and that unless bought and paid for not one of them could be released. But the women they turned their attention to were always those whose time was almost up—that is to say, those who would presently be got rid of because of no further use—too ill and debilitated, too much riddled with disease, perhaps, to be serviceable even in the lowest and cheapest class of house. And she understood that occasionally these priests had succeeded in their attempts.*

For, almost farcical as it may at first sight appear, there are women in those houses who have not completely abandoned their religion—some are women who were educated in convent schools. Messaline mentioned instances of this. She had found several girls who owned rosaries and used them. Several who said their prayers daily. They soothed their consciences by persuading themselves that Fate had been against them—particularly those girls who had been decoyed or betrayed and

brought to the life of shame against their wills

A curious freemasonry exists amongst the men and women engaged in this industry—if I dare use the word (I employ the term “freemasonry,” too, in its general significance, and not in any sense in relation to the Freemasons or anything appertaining to Freemasonry) We read and hear a good deal about the criminal underworld of the capitals of Europe, the blackmailers, the forgers, the receivers of stolen property, the thieves and crooks of all kinds But rarely is reference made to the vast organisation—in a sense it is an organisation—which is composed almost wholly of the vile creatures who trade in human souls and bodies

Yet it forms a great underworld of its own, with ramifications throughout every quarter of the globe. The men and women engaged in the Traffic know one another for the most part, or recognize one another by secret signs and codes, no matter to what nation they may belong They have their regular secret meeting places, hotels which they frequent, special districts which they haunt. To the world at large the heads of the “profession” appear to be just ordinary folk who might be engaged in any sort of legitimate business, or even men and women of leisure Some of them look extremely prosperous, as indeed they are Some look like respectable suburban residents, which they emphatically are not There is a

touch of humour in the reflection that amongst even this scum, which ought all to be in jail, class distinctions exist! But Messaline assured me that they do. The "big" men and women who control dozens of houses in the different countries and stay at expensive hotels, keep their less prosperous fellow criminals at arm's length, while the latter, again, will not associate on terms of intimacy with the third rate *souteneurs* of places like Clichy, those streets at the back of the Friedrichstrasse, and the odious Paseo and Boca districts of Buenos Aires, not to mention a certain area in West Central London.

Think of it—there are probably scores of these human wolves walking about the streets of every big city to day. Probably you have spoken to some of them. Possibly they have sat at your table in this or that hotel on the Continent or in America and you have found them quite interesting talkers. Maybe you have asked some of them to come and see you in your home. You have shaken them by the hand.

An amazing state of things that a big section of one's fellow creatures should batten and grow rich on the lives of another section whilst mixing with that section on terms of friendship even of intimacy. When a brutal murderer escapes detection you hear people exclaim almost shudderingly—"Just think—he might be sitting beside you or me in a train or an omnibus!" Yet, if he were, would it be

worse than sitting beside a man or woman who has sent hundreds, perhaps thousands of women to perdition and who in all probability is directly responsible for almost endless victims of a foul disease? Intimately as I knew Madame Messaline, there were times when that thought came to me while she was narrating her experiences, so that I felt I could hardly bear to remain near her any longer.

She herself had been in prison several times, but she would not say how often or in what countries, or what for, with one exception, to be mentioned later. Some of her houses had for various reasons been raided, but she had never been in them when the raid took place, and generally the *patronne*, her tool, had been held responsible and suffered the penalty. Not that the *patronne* much minded. She knew that on her release she would at once be re-employed by Messaline and compensated for what she had gone through. So what did it matter?

I thought that after wandering over the world for five years with a reckless young millionaire I knew about all there was to be known about Life in all its phases, but some of Messaline's revelations astonished me.

She had a wide connection amongst what I must call for want of a better phrase the "retail trade," that is amongst private individuals who came to her to buy one or more girls as you would buy bars of soap. Among these customers was a powerful and fabulously rich

touch of humour in the reflection that amongst even this scum, which ought all to be in jail class distinctions exist! But Messaline assured me that they do. The "big" men and women who control dozens of houses in the different countries and stay at expensive hotel keep their less prosperous fellow-criminals at arm's length, while the latter, again will not associate on terms of intimacy with the third rate *souteneurs* of places like Clichy, those streets at the back of the Friedrichstrasse, and the odious Paseo and Boca districts of Buenos Aires, not to mention a certain area in West Central London.

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I once asked her to forget for the moment that she had any interest of any sort in this Traffic, and to tell me quite frankly whether she thought it would be a good thing or not for houses of ill-fame to be abolished by law.

She reflected for a minute or so and then replied :

“Your question is a difficult one to answer, *monsieur*. In a town where there are houses of that sort, there need be no street prostitution, street-walking can be forbidden, and often is. Consequently men are not openly solicited, yet if they want women they know where to find them. Added to that the women in the houses are periodically examined medically by Government inspectors, who, if they carry out their examinations as they are all *supposed* to do—I won't say they always do it—can do much to prevent the spread of disease, whereas common street-walkers may, and almost always do sooner or later, contract the disease without knowing they have done so, and afterwards spread it knowingly or unknowingly. That is the argument in favour of licensed houses of what you call ‘ill-fame’.

Myself, the moment I find a woman showing any trace of the disease—she goes

“On the other hand, the knowledge that the houses exist and that they can be visited by anybody at any time is a strong temptation to men, and in particular to boys, to seek out women; they might be ashamed to be seen in the open street in the company of such a

Oriental potentate whose appetite was never satisfied. He never bought less than ten girls at a time, and generally many more, and he would have them all sent out to him in charge of an armed escort. It was a red-letter day, Messaline said, when an order came from this native. He favoured mostly girls from Galicia and had good reason for insisting on their being carefully escorted, for on one occasion the convoy had been raided by a rival and less opulent potentate whilst on its way inland, and all the girls had disappeared.

There was keen competition amongst her girls when it became known that an order from this man had been received, for they had heard that he treated all his harem ladies with the greatest courtesy and lavished upon them the most expensive gifts. Also they lived in luxury whilst under his protection and were allowed to go free when he had done with them, being thus left in a position to live in idleness for the rest of their lives.

Messaline's agents were ever on the alert to discover when and where soldiers or sailors were likely to be stationed in large numbers, and on the news reaching her she would at once arrange for consignments of her women to be drafted to the neighbourhood without delay. Sometimes on such occasions she would rent a whole street of houses, no matter what it cost, for well she knew that the small fortune thus disbursed would eventually return to her and considerable profit in addition.

someone is coming in, and can get a clear view of him without being himself seen. This door-keeper, an expert at his job, and well paid because he knows by sight almost every "undesirable," would, if the visitor were one of the undesirables, instantly pull a small lever which would cause the second door, made of steel, to bolt itself automatically, and no amount of hammering on it could then make it give way. Then if the would be visitor continued to give trouble, or to make himself obnoxious, the police would be notified by telephone and come at once to remove him.

woman. Also the habit of visiting the houses, once acquired, is seldom abandoned, even after the frequenters marry. So you see I am right in saying that your question is a hard one to answer."

Patrons whom she greatly disliked were men of the criminal class, in particular known criminals—thieves and others of that type. Perhaps because they looked upon the keepers of such houses as criminals themselves—and rightly—they rarely hesitated to fleece them in any and every way they could, and frequently they tried to extort money from them by blackmail, even by threats of personal violence. And a serious fight in a brothel, particularly if anybody was wounded, generally meant a public inquiry and in consequence newspaper publicity, and publicity of any kind was the one thing the *souteneurs* dreaded and would do almost anything to avoid. On more than one occasion houses of her own had been suppressed as the result of a public inquiry after a brawl.

But of late years, she said, the possibility of trouble of this nature arising in the houses which she controlled had been reduced to a minimum, owing to the installation of an ingenious electrical signalling apparatus of her own designing. Now every patron entering any house of hers has to pass through two doors, the second twelve or sixteen feet beyond the first. As he pushes open the first, a concealed door-keeper receives the signal that

officers seated at the various tables a young man in British uniform who had a nasty-looking scar just visible above the collar of his tunic. That set her wondering, for so many German officers get slashed about the face and neck in duels. She watched him narrowly right through the meal, and finally came to the conclusion that certainly his features were not British—I have said already that Messaline was an extraordinarily keen judge of character.

The A P M was at *déjeuner* at a table near the young officer's, so she deemed it inadvisable to speak to him then, but directly the young man had finished his meal and left the room she went over to the A P M and told him of her suspicion. At once the latter hurried out, but the officer, he was told, had just driven away in a taxi.

At his office the A P M showed Messaline a collection of photographs of men and women known to be or suspected of being enemy spies, and she quickly recognized among them the young man with the scar.

We got on to his track, only to discover that he had left for another base. At the second base it was discovered that he had sailed for England some days before. In England he was traced to London, from London to Newcastle, from Newcastle to Liverpool, thence to Plymouth, and finally he was arrested at a house in Bute Street, Cardiff. In his luggage were British and French uniforms and several

## CHAPTER THE TENTH

THOUGH wholly devoid of all principles, Messaline yet had this in her favour—she was wholeheartedly devoted to both the French and the British nations, and during the War did all in her power to help the military authorities by at once giving them any information which she happened to glean regarding enemy spies. And from first to last she gleaned a good deal, I know.

In connection with this her knowledge of languages helped her. She spoke English, French, German, Russian and Italian fluently, and could write them all fairly well. Naturally enemy spies visited her houses, for they frequented every place where French or British officers were likely to be found off duty. She discovered that even some of her women were spies, and they were handed over. This discovery was not difficult, for in such houses there are always special facilities for seeing and hearing secretly.

She told me a good deal about all this, and among the spies whom she was directly instrumental in getting arrested were the following.

While at *déjeuner* one day in an hotel at a French base, she noticed among the British

that the most finely-bred people, if they become abnormal, seek the most peculiar and violent contrasts in their animal passions, for which reason men of colour often exercise a sort of spell over them. The worst degenerates, too, the men and women with a craving for much that is revolting, the drug addicts, the homosexuals, the bi-sexuals, the heterosexuals and others with sexual aberrations, are practically all people who in most other respects are cultured and refined. I believe the correctness of this theory is vouched for by many mental specialists.

Asked how people of the class of which she spoke could get to know coloured folk, she replied that nothing could be easier. She herself had many times acted as intermediary, and as often as not acquaintanceships were brought about, as in other cases already referred to, through the medium of newspaper advertisements. Men of colour were wanted to-day for many sorts of posts—as athletic instructors, commissionaires and hall-porters in certain clubs, particularly night clubs and dance clubs, for various sorts of entertainments, for orchestras, as servants in private houses sometimes, also as restaurant waiters and so on. What more easy, then, than to advertise for coloured men to fill such posts, interview them privately. . . .

“Men of colour are the most discreet people on earth,” she added. “Treat them with justice and consideration and they will never

other disguises, also the uniform of a British Red Cross nurse. He was shot.

On another occasion she overheard a conversation in one of her *maisonnettes d'amour* which led her to warn the military authorities that an attempt was to be made to blow up a railway bridge over which troops had to travel on their way up the line. There were four enemy spies hidden in a forest nine miles outside the town, and at a certain hour in the night they were to rush down in their car, disguised as French officers, and make the attempt.

All sentries on the road from the forest to the bridge were notified, and at about the time named the car with its enormous headlights came tearing along. It dashed past the first sentry, heedless of his challenge, and past the second. The third, warned by telephone, was ready for it, and fired at each lamp, extinguishing them both. In the pitch darkness the car crashed into a ditch beside the road. Two of the spies were killed outright, a third was seriously injured, and the fourth was taken prisoner.

I had no idea, until Messaline told me, that quite a lot of white women (though not many young girls) of all nationalities are not in the least attracted by white men, but find it difficult to resist the "allurements" of the coloured races.

Such women, she said, belonged almost invariably to the *hochwolgebornen*, and rarely to the middle or lower class. She had a theory



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“Men of colour are the most discreet people on earth,” she added. “Treat them with justice and consideration and they will never

let you down I would any day sooner trust a coloured man to keep a secret of that kind than I would any white man because even the most discreet of white men is liable to talk indiscreetly if he becomes at all intoxicated. When a coloured man gets intoxicated he grows silent, and the more he drinks the more silent he will become generally. That I know for a fact. Also I have known white men have recourse to blackmail when Society women had been so injudicious as to have secret dealings of that kind with them. I have never known a coloured man try to extort blackmail under similar conditions."

At some of the great exhibitions held in Europe and in America where native villages were included among the attractions women *of the class referred to crowded into these villages and their compounds and made almost open overtures to the natives*. She mentioned by name quite well known women who had arranged clandestine meetings with some of the village natives—often the meetings had to take place in remote parts of the town to ensure their absolute secrecy. As for women of refinement who secretly were dope fiends they would readily consent to be conducted into the lowest and vilest of resorts to indulge their uncontrollable vice unbeknown to their friends and relatives.

At one time Messaline and others opened establishments in Paris London Vienna Berlin and other big cities which purported to

be for massage. All the 'nurses,' as they were called, actually were qualified to administer massage, but of course they administered much more than that. Their qualification, however, prevented such houses from being raided by the police, and the nurses were clever enough to realise at once if visitors wanted only massage in which cases they would be the soul of propriety and their patients would go away quite unaware that the place they had just been in was really nothing more than a cleverly *camouflaged* house of accommodation.

In London at that time these places were boldly advertised by means of sandwich boards announcing that Nurse This or That could be seen by appointment between certain hours for massage, electrical treatment, pine baths, friction baths and so on and one of the hot beds of such places was Jermyn Street. After a while, however, the truth became known—the newspapers took the matter up—and now all masseuses have to be registered and surprise visits are paid to massage establishments by County Council inspectors so that irregularities in such places are virtually at an end, at least in this country.

Foiled in that direction, Messaline and others like her turned their attention to the sweet shops and all over the Continent as well as in big cities here a sweet shop became the synonym for a brothel. I have spoken already of the confectioner's shop "blind." In much the same way these sweet shops had a

door behind the counter sometimes below the counter, and the customers came in and bought some sweets and presently went through the door and upstairs or downstairs as the case might be. Many of these places were brothels which could be patronized by either men or women or both so that in some respects they were worse than the alleged massage houses had been.

But again the truth got about and the next places of the kind took the form of hairdressers' shops and in particular barbers' shops where the barbers were women. Some of these bogus hairdressers' and barbers' shops exist still and recently houses masquerading as nursing homes have carried on a thriving business, though now the police in this country have such 'homes' under observation and many they have already succeeded in suppressing.

And so it goes on and will probably continue to go on as it has done from time immemorial. The vice can be stamped out in one direction but it immediately springs up in another. Messaline was right in her contention that until the demand ceases the supply will continue no matter how energetic the attempts to suppress it may be at any rate for many years to come. And perhaps there was something in her self justification on the ground that if she were not engaged in the Traffic someone else would be in her place and possibly somebody whose nature was more horrible than hers.

For in spite of her villainy she never lusted for cruelty or ill treated her victims, as many of the traffickers do, women as well as men.

During the War she invited me to her Christmas Eve *réveillon*. I have attended many queer parties in my time—in my newspaper reporting days I was present at a birthday party given by Diebler, the Paris executioner, father of the present man—but that reception of Messaline's was certainly one of the most unusual I can remember. Many, I think most, of the guests were men in her own line of business, and their "wives," and just as doctors and lawyers and divines and journalists and others talk "shop" when they get together, so these people talked the "shop" of their odious trade, spoke of their profits, their new ideas and enterprises, their "sources of supply" (*sic*), the improvements in their "premises," as they called their evil houses, the "types" that were becoming popular, their patrons in this country and that, fresh precautions it would be necessary to take in this and that country, while all were unanimous in condemning the attitude of the military and civil authorities in France and England and the steps they were taking to boycott wide areas where troops were stationed by placing such areas out of bounds. It was instructive and illuminating conversation of a sort that probably few men outside that vicious circle have ever listened to.

I had heard that perverts of a peculiar type

stitute a direct menace, and it is known that some of the inquisitive or vicious folk who seek them out never return. Yet they still attract many, Messaline assured me, because there are people who will run any risk in order to gratify their curiosity, or their unnatural lusts, as the case may be. This I emphasize in the hope that these lines may be read by some of the people alluded to, and serve as a deterrent.

There, too, traffickers in dope meet some of their victims. Though Messaline declared that she never dealt in dope, I have reason for supposing that she lied. For she knew so much about it, how and whence it is imported, names of victims among well known actresses and others, its effects, and the symptoms by which drug addicts can be identified that I feel convinced she must at some time have had an interest in its sale. Perhaps she feared I might be tempted to betray her if she admitted having handled the stuff, though ordinarily she trusted me implicitly.

## CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH

"WHAT has always astonished me," Messaline said to me one day, "is that in some countries the police pay so little attention to the increasing number of advertisements in which offers are made to introduce perfect strangers to one another in order that these strangers, who of course know nothing whatever of one another, may become intimate friends! Most of the newspapers try to ban such advertisements, I know, but often it must be difficult for them to distinguish which of their many advertisements are "straightforward," that is not what they appear to be

"Sometimes the advertiser professes to run a 'friendship forming circle,' which I have reason to know, generally means—well, you can guess what it means. The idea hinted at or implied of course is that there are in London and in all big cities hundreds or thousands of unfortunate men and women who have not a friend in the world, and who therefore will be happier if brought into touch with people whose interests and tastes are the same as their own. It all sounds very nice and human and philanthropic, but in point of fact it is exactly the reverse.

"For the organizers of these friendship-

forming 'circles' find the business of bringing people together extremely simple and lucrative. The usual charge for effecting an introduction is from ten to twenty-five guineas, and all fees are payable in advance.

"The advertiser keeps an indexed ledger. That is all he needs. In it are entered the name and address of every man and woman who answers his advertisements; all particulars they send about themselves; also all particulars of the sort of people they wish to make friends with, not forgetting such details as age, facial and physical appearance, whether dark or fair, of an amorous disposition or not, and so forth and so on.

"And to matrimonial or alleged matrimonial advertisements much the same applies. I have seen letters written by these male (and female) agents in reply to applicants for suitable husbands or wives, in which the matrimonial agent stated that on receipt of a preliminary fee of thirty guineas he would 'undertake to introduce one woman (or man) after another until you meet one you feel you would be disposed to marry. Upon your marriage a further fee, to be arranged between us, will be payable.'"

"To be arranged between us" is good. Messaline assured me that she had never been engaged in friendship-forming or matrimonial brokerage work herself, but I doubt if she spoke the truth on that point.

Many will remember that, during the War, stories were told of the enemy nations employ-



ing syphilitic women to spread the disease amongst our troops. Messaline declared that to be a lie, and added that in Germany the same story was spread regarding the French. It was all part of the propaganda of lies which every nation engaged in the War circulated in order to stir up additional racial hatred.

On the other hand, she said, many professional prostitutes were enlisted as spies and did the work of spying uncommonly well. Some officers when under the influence of drink, and artfully egged on by their charmers, unwittingly revealed secrets which eventually cost thousands of lives. Occasionally, however, the women would be hoist with their own petard, for officers who were clever actors would feign intoxication and impart false information which proved disastrous to the enemy.

"If I had sons," she said once, "I should teach them how to avoid diseased women. It is quite easy to tell at a glance if women have the disease or not."

"How?" I naturally asked.

"All men and women afflicted with it," she replied, "even if only slightly, reveal it in their faces. There are certain infallible signs. Some hospital nurses are acquainted with them—doctors of experience recognize them at once, of course—but the great majority of folk are woefully ignorant of them. It is disastrous that they should be, as many discover when too

late I would undertake to walk along your Piccadilly and your Regent Street or anywhere else you might like to name, and out of all the hundreds of people I should pass I would pick out immediately those afflicted. More, I would tell you how badly they had it, even how long they had suffered from it. Often the secret is revealed by a peculiar hue about the sides of the nose. A sagging of the skin at the corners of the mouth, too, and a looseness of the skin about the eyes, are generally signs. Spots of a certain kind on the forehead, curious white or pale patches on the lips and tongue and in the throat and on the back of the neck, also glandular swellings, all tell their own tale. Even the expression of the eyes sometimes betrays the truth. When the disease has made strides, the peculiar appearance of the hands helps considerably to show what is the matter, the knuckles in particular having a most unnatural tint.

"Oh, I have seen some shocking things. I have seen men whom the majority of folk would have believed to be in excellent health. I have seen them afterwards stripped. On their limbs were dreadful open sores. Yet such men have not hesitated to come to my houses to try to get some of my women. I discovered a way of finding out if would-be patrons of my houses were diseased or not, for I could not afford to have my girls contract venereal and help to spread it. Then every time a man in that state came to me I ordered

him out of the place at once. Brutes! They ought to be imprisoned!

"Do you know that at least one half, and possibly many more, of the cases of suicide you read about are the result of the disease? It is so, truly. That and blackmail, as I have reason to know. The public reads in the newspaper that Mr This or That, very likely a gentleman highly respected and believed to be the soul of respectability, has shot or drowned himself, and they exclaim, 'poor fellow, what can have made him do it? He was well off, didn't seem to have a care in the world.' But I could tell them why he did it, eight times out of twelve. And for myself I think that people riddled with the disease are justified in ending their lives. What is the use of their going on living? Once syphilis has got a firm hold, nothing can cure it, though it can be cured in its early stages if you go to a doctor who understands it. Many doctors, however, don't understand it properly. And the natural end of a syphilitic victim is horrible—horrible."

She went on to describe what generally happens, but I will spare the reader the revolting details. Being the type of woman she was, what seemed to infuriate her most was that diseased men should deliberately continue to spread their plague, thus placing some of her women out of action and so affecting her receipts adversely. Nothing but that seemed to worry her much, though she was already immensely rich. Certainly it was not out of

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"Do you know that at least one half, and possibly many more, of the cases of suicide you read about are the result of the disease? It is so, truly. That and blackmail as I have reason to know. The public reads in the newspaper that Mr This or That, very likely a gentleman highly respected and believed to be the soul of respectability, has shot or drowned himself, and they exclaim, 'poor fellow, what can have made him do it?' Well, all off, didn't seem

kindly feeling for her wretched slaves that she dreaded their contracting the disease

She gave me a list of names of the drugs which serve to stimulate passion. She herself supplied them only to those amongst her *clientèle* who asked for a stimulant, and not to strangers. Quite old men, she declared, she had "sexually rejuvenated" by means of such drugs. And she maintained that the so-called love potions of the chiromantists and wizards and witch-doctors of old were nothing more than drugs of that kind.

"Intense sexuality is sometimes near akin to madness," she said.

But not infrequently it is actually a mental disease. If allowed to continue unchecked it may develop into sexual aberration and become eventually pure degeneracy in a variety of forms. She told me of a respected elderly man who to the world was apparently absolutely sane. Yet in fact he was far from being sane. He was a curious type of monomaniac. At intervals of a few months the lust for blood would obsess him, and in the dead of night he would creep stealthily out of his house, go into the fields—he lived in the heart of the country—crawl slowly up to an unsuspecting sheep asleep, pounce upon it and either cut its throat with the table-knife he had brought with him for the purpose, or stab it to death, or mutilate it frightfully.

Some days afterwards he would send anonymously by post to the owner of the sheep a

sum of money covering the value of the animal That went on for years Eventually he was caught literally red handed, convicted and imprisoned Yet when he had served his sentence he did the same thing again It was monomania He couldn't help doing it And Messaline's theory was that men of the Jack the Ripper type were not actually criminals so much as victims of this peculiar kind of monomania Such men ought not to be sent to jail she said They ought to be shut up in asylums She mentioned other amazing forms of what she called "monomania lust," but I prefer not to enter into details

If all that Messaline told me was true—and I have no reason for supposing that any considerable part of it was untrue—then the human mind is more than extraordinary

She had a lot to say about "sexual fetishism" as she termed it—that is the strange way in which people of different temperament become excited sexually She had known quite a lot of men whom the sight of a woman's foot encased in a high heeled shoe would excite in the most amazing fashion Such men seemed often to be wholly unattracted by a lovely face, even by a passionate and sensual face The only thing they cared to look at was the foot in the high heeled shoe the higher the heel the better

Then there was the hair plait fetish which led men apparently mentally sound in other respects to run the risk of disgrace and im

prisonment if caught in the act—as they sometimes were, and are still—of cutting off a girl's plaited tail of hair without her knowledge. One man when arrested had in his possession no less than eleven tails of hair of various shades, and, when charged, admitted having cut them all off unsuspecting girls seated in front of him on omnibuses and in theatres. He always used a sharp pair of scissors, and would sever the hair with so much dexterity that until the twelfth occasion he was not even suspected of the crime—legally it is a crime.

Silk stockings, sealskin coats, fur collarettes, gloves, pocket-handkerchiefs, and other articles of apparel, as well as various perfumes, all were sexual fetishes to certain men—and to some women. They had merely to touch these things or to smell the perfumes to become at once overcome by what she described as "sexual hysteria." Even when the articles of apparel had not been worn they produced the same effect up to a point. But the effect was greater when they had been worn.

She told me of many men and women she had known who had all sorts of strange and unnatural ideas and desires, yet went about quite unsuspected. All crime, in her opinion, was a form of insanity, and the perpetrators ought to be treated medically, she said.

"But how would be world go along?" I asked her, "if nobody were punished? What would become of society? How would order of any kind be maintained?"

Her answer was again—"sanatoriums." The people with unnatural tastes and vices should be allowed to continue their lives unmolested provided they did not interfere with the rest of humanity. If they became tiresome, or annoyed in any way, they should at once be placed in sanatoriums and there kept under control. What it would cost the State to maintain them in such sanatoriums, or who would pay for their support if the State did not, it had not occurred to her to consider.

So flourishing is the traffic in women still, she assured me, that in some of the cities where its leaders have their headquarters a journal is actually printed and published—secretly, of course—which deals at length with the "industry" and shows what must be described as "trade returns" over fixed periods. She lent me a copy of the foul sheet, printed in Spanish, which had been circulated in certain districts in Buenos Aires, for the information of the many *souteneurs* resident in those areas. Nobody was mentioned by name, the various "traders" being indicated by letters and numerals known only to themselves and their accomplices.

Naturally I had free *entrée* to her houses during the time I was stationed at the French base, one of my duties being to inspect the houses at frequent intervals and make sure that they were being conducted in accordance with regulations. My visits were always surprise visits, for one never knew what might not



be happening in such places—deserters might be in hiding there, male or female enemy spies might be meeting there surreptitiously, and so on. Consequently I had many opportunities of conversing with the inmates, the victims virtually imprisoned there for the recreation and pleasure of man.

Few were unhappy, apparently, and all seemed to be resigned to their fate and to look upon it as the inevitable. If they were not there to serve men's appetites, others would be, so did it matter much? Yes, almost all had endured a period of mental torture, sometimes of physical torture, too, while being "broken in," but that time was past and would not come again. Their relatives, and their friends of bygone days, no doubt thought them dead, so must long ago have ceased grieving for them. And in their way they were comparatively content. For they were well looked after and properly fed, and rarely ill-treated except sometimes by patrons of the house cursed with the sadistic temperament.

## CHAPTER THE TWELFTH

SOME of them had strange stories to tell. One girl had been maid to the wife of a baronet. A woman of fashion staying in the house during the shooting season had taken a fancy to her and eventually induced the maid to give notice and come to her instead. Thus the woman had done by offering her double wages.

The girl had soon discovered her new mistress to be disposed to be unduly familiar with her, but this she had not greatly objected to as the lady had made it worth her while to do as she was told.

Then, a year later, whilst travelling abroad with her mistress, she had incurred the latter's displeasure or, what was more likely, her mistress had tired of her. She had told her she must go.

That had been in Nice in the height of the season. On making inquiries of a stranger in the street as to where she would be able to find suitable accommodation she had been told by the stranger a woman of good address, and affable that she herself would accompany her to an *appartement* she knew of owned by her sister, where the accommodation was good and not expensive and where she would be made comfortable.

Days went by The girl had written home more than once, but no reply had come to any of her letters Her money was running out She wrote out an urgent telegram, which the woman volunteered to send off for her as she was going into the town, she said Silence still Almost panic stricken, the girl at last found herself at the end of her resources

Then it was that the woman and her husband—or a man she said was her husband—came into her bedroom one night and made proposals to her Only then did the truth flash in upon the girl—letters coming to her, probably containing the money she had written and telegraphed for, must have been intercepted by these people, most likely the woman had never despatched her telegram She protested threatened cried, became hysterical But of what avail? The man and the woman had her in their power She must do as they ordered, they said, or be thrown into the street, penniless

And so it came about that before long she found herself yet another victim with no way of escape

There was another girl, an Austrian, who, judging by her features and her finger nails and her mode of speech, must have been of gentle birth Just eighteen she had been in one *bagno* and another from the age of eleven! All she could tell me of her past life was that whilst playing on the beach one day at San Remo she had missed her nurse

governess, a young woman she said who often was met on the sea front by a man with whom she would absent herself sometimes for an hour at a time.

On the afternoon in question a lady had got into conversation with the child soon after the nurse had made herself scarce, had laughed and played with her and helped her with her sand-castle, then had suggested their going together into the town to have tea which they had done. After tea the lady had said she would take her to her own home for a little while, as it was close by and she would like her to play with her children.

They had got into a car—or it might have been a taxi she could not remember which—and after that she had remembered nothing until she awoke to find herself undressed and in bed in a house which smelt of some sort of scent—whenever afterwards she had smelt that perfume it had reminded her of that house. The woman had been cruel to her, very cruel. She was allowed to roam about the house but never permitted to go out. Yes, she had been terribly frightened and utterly miserable and homesick. She could not now recollect clearly what her home or her parents had been like, because after awakening in that strange house her memory had failed her to some extent, and gradually all recollection of her past life had faded. For years she had been unable to remember even her surname, finally, after being in one house after another, she had been taken

a long journey by train and river boat to a town in Switzerland and from there been transferred, two years previously, to the house where I met her and questioned her. That she must as a child have been lovely was very apparent.

A curious story that Messaline told me was of a girl who at the age of eighteen turned into a boy—not turned out to be a boy. The way in which this transformation gradually took place I cannot well explain here, but later the girl left the house, was provided with a medical certificate and then applied to the authorities for “her” identity papers to be modified, a request which was granted. That, too, happened in Italy.

I have not. I am glad to say, often met men or women engaged in Messaline’s calling, but those I have met were people of low mental calibre—it betrayed itself in their faces, their voices, in their whole being. Which makes it the more surprising that Messaline should have been so different from them in almost every way.

They say that to succeed completely in any profession or business a man, or a woman ought to master every detail of every branch of it, also study its history and become acquainted with all its possibilities.

Certainly Messaline had done that in regard to her odious calling. Her knowledge of the history of prostitution in all its many varieties and in every country was extraordinary. I

have mentioned already some of the books which she possessed, but she had many more.

'Prostitution in Naples in the Fifteenth Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' "De la Prostitution dans la Ville de Paris," "Prostitution in London" "Les Filles Publiques de Paris" "Lectures on Female Prostitution" "Da Prostituição na Cidade de Lisboa," "Die Prostitution in Berlin und ihre Opfer," "Prostitution in Hamburg," "The History of Prostitution," "Prostitution in its Various Aspects," "La Prostitution des Filles Mineures," "The Sexual Life in England," 'Woman as Criminal and Prostitute,' are the titles of a few of the books of this sort which she showed me, names that I jotted down

And she could talk interestingly on the subject at interminable length Religion in its relation to sexuality in all ages and all countries was one of her favourite themes The works of the notorious Marquis de Sade she seemed to look upon as her Bible According to her theories many of the religious ceremonies of to day appertaining no matter to what creed have descended from the days of the service of Isis and of the festivals of Aphrodite and Bacchus, in modified forms She had all the records of "lust sacrifices" at her fingers' ends, and stories of the defloration by means of a divine symbol which at one period was so common, so she said in the East Indies and elsewhere

Often she held forth on such subjects as the

Myhtacult or religious prostitution of the Babylonians the worship of the goddess who was supposed to represent the uncontrolled life of Nature in its fullest creative activity, a form of sacrifice eventually abolished by the Emperor Constartine. She knew all about the sacred priests of Venus and their relations with the kade girls of the Phoenicians and the hierodules of the ancient Greeks—she said that Corinth alone had possessed no less than two thousand female hierodules for many generations, who sacrificed themselves within the historic temple of Aphrodite Porne.

When she warmed to her subject, as she usually did after a little while her eyes would begin to shine as though with some sort of fervour, and the verbal pictures she would draw were really wonderful to listen to. She would begin by describing in vivid terms, say, the religious festivals of Isis in Egypt, pass on to those of Imperial Rome then to the festivals of Baal Peor amongst the Jews the Venus and Adonis festivals of the Phoenicians in Cyprus and Byblos, the Aphrodisian, Dionysian and Eleusinian orgies of the Hellenes, the amazing rites of Caitanya and the Sakte sects in India then go on to describe, perhaps, the wild sexual religious outbreaks in ancient Central and South America. Had she lectured in public as vividly and wonderfully as she talked when we were alone together, no hall would have been big enough to hold her audiences.

One statement of hers may come as a sur

prise to many—in all times and in all ages the most immoral men in the world have always been the ascetics, she declared more than once. She accounted for it by saying again that you cannot change nature. Many of these men, probably most of them, withdrew themselves from their fellow-creatures fully meaning to live a life of virtue and of sexual abstinence. For awhile—months, possibly a year or two, their efforts would be successful. Then by degrees nature would begin slowly to assert herself. Eventually their imaginations got the upper hand, and in the end they became secretly men of most immoral lives.

“Why is it,” I remember her saying, “that celibate priests express such intense indignation if by chance women’s fashions in dress lead to their clothing themselves more scantily than formerly? Simply because the sight of women so clothed *does* sexually excite men who all their lives have largely abstained from sexual intercourse, and consequently they honestly believe that every man who looks upon women dressed like that must feel just as they do. Naturally the ordinary, normal man who lives an ordinary, normal life, feels not in the least stirred. He has seen women much more scantily clothed, possibly wholly undraped, again and again, so why should he get excited? But priests and people like them can never be made to understand that.”

Her views on the subject of sexual impotence were also of interest. When does a man



become impotent? Often and often the question is asked, yet nobody seems to be able to answer it; or, rather, everybody answers it but apparently no two men agree. Messaline believed that impotence might arise from complete sexual abstinence, supposing men were strong-willed enough to abstain completely for many years. But she doubted that being possible, except in the case of priests, in whose complete or almost complete abstention she did believe. Certain excesses, notably alcoholism, tended to render a normally healthy man impotent many years before he need become so, and the same with regard to indulgence in certain drugs. A healthy man living a healthy life, however, need not become impotent until attacked by his final illness, she said. She had known many hundreds of men who through ruining their constitutions had become impotent under the age of thirty. Many more she knew who, doing all things in moderation, had remained potent practically to the end of their lives, at an advanced age. Indeed she declared to me that an Englishman named Thomas Parr had married and become a father when over the age of a hundred!

In a book written by a Dr Pohl-Pincus she had marked a passage—"The most frightful sexual excesses can do no harm to the strength of a nation."

I questioned her on the point.

"But that is obvious," she exclaimed, "or ought to be. After all, the men and women

who indulge in sexual excesses, though numbered in their thousands in every nation, constitute but a fragment of each nation and so cannot affect it as a whole. Also some of these vice-addicts remain mentally sound in all other respects, so can still carry out the work of the nation, or whatever branch of it may be theirs. People talk about the decline and fall of the great empires which became addicted to vices of all kinds and indulged in orgies and lived lives of unbridled luxury, but are you sure that their decline and fall were attributable even indirectly to those causes? True, Athens and other cities, so great and so corrupt, passed away, but then so did Grecian Sparta and equally virtuous cities. The argument so often advanced that civilization carried to excess can bring great nations crashing to the ground is to my mind grotesque. They fall in spite of their ultra-civilization, and not because of it. Surely you will give me credit for having lived with my eyes very wide open and admit that my opportunities of judging mankind, the best and in particular the worst of it, in many parts of the world, have been unique? "

The idea has long been prevalent in London, Paris, Berlin and other cities that sexual perversions are, if not the outcome of genius, at any rate among the common attributes of genius, indeed that to be addicted to certain vices betrays an artistic temperament, exceptional literary ability ( ! ), " the gift of music," as I have heard it called, love of colour and

beauty, great mental refinement, in short that the most highly cultured people are morally the greatest perverts

When questioned about this, Messaline was immensely amused. She at once produced two of her famous volumes—works of anthropology and ethnology—in which the theory is utterly flouted. The authors of those books quote almost incredible instances of artificial sexual malpractices which to this day, they aver, are common amongst at least two of the lowest of the savage races, and go on to prove that, so far as genius is concerned men thus exceptionally endowed become famous *in spite* of their moral failings which was Messaline's argument.

## CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH

A FACT probably little known is that the practice of repeatedly tattooing the body has a considerable vogue, often amongst people of high social standing, and that it indicates almost invariably a peculiar mental perversity. Messaline mentioned by name quite a lot of what she called "distinguished folk" who were obsessed by this passion—she declared it to be a passion if not a vice—for being tattooed again and again, until in the end almost every unexposed part of their bodies bore designs, sometimes in several colours.

And practically always, she said, such designs were of a more or less obscene nature. The first designs might be comparatively harmless. Those which immediately followed would be less harmless. And so it would go on until the final scenes were indescribable. I remember a tattooer in Jermyn Street telling me something of the sort many years ago and his saying that many women liked being tattooed but I didn't believe him then. Messaline assured me that the practice was a kind of monomania which increased with indulgence and seemed actually to possess a corrupting influence and that by far the worst offenders were muddle-

aged married women. Unmarried women rarely wanted to be tattooed, and young married women not very often. Probably the girls bore in mind the fact that when they married their husbands might ask awkward questions if they found tattoo marks on them, while of course if a man suddenly found on his young wife's body marks of a sort which had not been there before, he, too, might not be particularly delighted!

In this connection it is interesting to remember that, if the stories of travellers in little-known countries are to be credited, the most debased of native tribes are those amongst which tattooing is universally practised. Do they, too, become more debased the more they tattoo? No explorer, so far as I am aware, has ever touched upon that point. Yet it certainly would be interesting to know, in view of the fact that whereas tattoo addicts among the white and civilized races are to be found mostly amongst people in the higher walks of life, apparently amongst savages these addicts are confined almost solely to men and women of the lowest caste.

According to Messaline, epilepsy is almost wholly responsible for more than one-half of the vices practised by confirmed degenerates, from which it would seem that epilepsy and degeneracy are closely allied. Yet doctors whom I have questioned mostly maintain that that is not so, that epilepsy does not necessarily breed degeneracy, and that the fact of an

epileptic man or woman being degenerate is merely a coincidence. Personally I am inclined to discredit their theory in favour of Messaline's, in view of the fact that Messaline had all her life had exceptional opportunities—which she had not neglected—of studying every variety of perverse and vicious person, and had lived in close association with such people

I have already mentioned Messaline's emphatic declaration that never in her life had she had aught to do with the sale or exploitation of drugs, except to her own patrons. Yet her knowledge of all to do with dope and the people who use it, and how and from whom it can be obtained, was certainly considerable

Opium houses, ether-houses, hashish houses and cocaine houses were to be found in every capital in Europe, she assured me, but particularly in Vienna, Paris and London. In Paris the best known (best known that is to drug-addicts) were situated in Avenue Jena, Avenue Hoche and Rue Lauriston, also in Neuilly and in Rue de Rivoli. There are, or were, one or two houses of the sort in the West End of London—for an obvious reason I refrain from naming the streets—but most of the addicts in London indulge their vice in the lowest of low haunts, far from civilization, so to speak, namely, away in the region of the East India Docks and Victoria Docks, while two resorts of the kind are to be found on the outskirts of Deptford.

What is the exact effect of indulgence in drugs? The effects vary a good deal, she said. They all cause vomiting on the first occasion, sometimes on the first few occasions; then, by degrees, they begin to produce voluptuous dreams and sensations which vary in intensity according to the individual's temperament, tastes, power of imagination and so forth. Opium conjures up brilliant pictures and visions. Hashish does so with greater intensity but takes longer to become accustomed to, so that often the novice gives up hashish in disgust. Ether, she declared, produces "vibration of the flesh and of the soul," and the dreams and visions last longer. On the other hand when the addict awakens after these dreams he frequently is violently sick, and remains *hors de combat* sometimes for a day or two. Another after effect of most drugs of this kind, but in particular of ether, is that the victims end by becoming perverts of a debased kind.

Also, with ether the *ecstatic* period does not last long. After it has reached its culminating point it begins to decline quickly. To encourage or revive it the victim increases his doses or his injections, until, at last, nature claims her revenge, and he becomes a physical and mental wreck, while often criminal tendencies suddenly begin to develop. Over-indulgence in morphine produces perhaps the worst after-effects of all, and nothing can cure a morphine victim when the vice has enchained him—or

her In women the after effects are even worse than in men as a rule

All this was told to me, remember by a woman who swore that never in the whole of her career had she handled or in any way dealt with or encouraged the use of drugs of any sort, except when her own patrons asked her for some


There may be readers of these pages who will maintain that such a woman as Messaline ought early in her life to have been put under lock and key that there should be no place in the world for such a creature With that I do not wholly agree Her knowledge of the perverse side of human nature was so exceptional that use might well have been made of her in regard say, to the treatment of sexual perverts of a kind Some of these unfortunates can be cured of their evil passions but not by punishment or by preaching or by treating them as social pariahs There are physical and pharmacological therapeutical methods by means of which their mode of life can be changed—such changes have been made Bodily treatment and mental repose and a special dietary and the absorption of various herbal preparations—the secrets of these preparations were known to Messaline—are among the methods adopted Physical suggestive treatment has also proved effectual in many cases Indeed any doctor possessing scientific understanding of sexual anomalies and what Messaline called “diseases of the will” should be able to eradi



cate many of the perverse habits alluded to, or at any rate greatly modify their intensity. But how many physicians are gifted with that understanding? For though understanding may be cultivated and developed, it is largely a gift of nature.

And Messaline possessed it in a very high degree. Also she had done all in her power to develop it. Consequently she was often able to help with excellent practical advice men and women "far gone" who applied to her, as quite a lot did. They felt they could speak to her without reserve or sense of shame, which they declared they could not do to their most intimate friends or even to their doctors. And that is why I say that a woman like Messaline—if, indeed, there are others exactly like her, which I doubt—has her uses, her place in the scheme of the universe.

She described to me cases she had treated with extraordinarily satisfactory results. Almost everything she said depended upon the extent to which the will power of the patient could be restored or strengthened. To bring this about she largely employed personal influence by means of suggestion, not necessarily hypnotic suggestion. In the latter she had not much faith, she said, owing to its effect not being ordinarily lasting. Nothing weakened the will, paralyzed the mind so much as dominance of blind and above all abnormal impulses, which usually ended by becoming sources of hypochondria and self contempt.



To weaken these impulses the will first and foremost, must be strengthened, therefore her plan was to begin by educating the will. Also the patient was warned against introspection and against adopting a pessimistic outlook on life. Always, always his outlook on life must be guided into optimistic channels.

It may seem strange, incongruous, that a woman who all her life had battered on some of the worst vices of human nature and therefore deliberately encouraged those vices should at the same time endeavour to eradicate them. But then Messaline was an entirely incomprehensible woman, wholly paradoxical. I think that was largely why she interested me and why I studied her so closely. Most criminals are more or less interesting human documents, I suppose and every white slave trader must be catalogued as a criminal, yet I cannot admit that Messaline's fellow criminals interested me much. Even the theory that criminals who die in their beds suffer mental torture when aware that their hour to face their Maker has come, did not apply to Messaline. I have been told that she died quite peaceably.

To day the mistake is often made of confusing the term "prostitute" with the term "demi mondaine." In reality, though such women resemble each other in some respects, they are by no means identical. I have by me a copy of Alexandre Dumas's historic play "Demi Monde," in which in the ninth scene

of the second act, the following passage, spoken by Olivier de Jalin, clearly shows the difference:—

“ . . . And all these women [*demi mondaines*] have made a false step in their past, they have a small black spot upon their name, and they go in company as much as possible, so that the spot may be less conspicuous. They have the same origin, the same appearance, the same prejudices as good society, but they no longer belong to it, and they form that which we call the half-world, which floats like an island upon the ocean of Paris, and draws towards itself, assumes and recognizes, everything which falls from the firm land, or which wanders out or runs away from the firm land, without counting the foreign shipwrecked individuals who come no man knows whence.

“ Since the married men under the protection of the legal code, have had the right to banish from the bosom of the family a woman who has forgotten her duty, the morals of married life have undergone a revolution which has created a new world—for what becomes of all these expelled compromised women? The first of them who found herself shown the door, bewailed her fault, and hid her shame in retirement but—the second? She sought the first one out and as soon as there were two of them they called the fault a misfortune the crime a mistake and began to make excuses for one another mutually. Having become three, they asked one another to dinner, having become four—they danced a quadrille. Now round these women there grouped themselves young girls also who had begun their life with a false step, false widows, women who bore the name of the lovers with whom they lived, some of those rapid ‘marriages’ which had lasted as liaisons of many years’ duration; finally, all the women who wished people to believe that they were something else than they really were, and did not wish to appear in their true colours. At

the present day this irregular world is in full bloom and its bastard society is greatly loved by young men. For here love is less difficult than in circles above—and not so expensive as in circles below, that is the circles of ordinary prostitutes.

I believe I am right in saying that in legal parlance a woman is not a prostitute unless she plies for hire wholly and entirely for payment. If it can be proved that a woman believed to be a prostitute occasionally gives herself to a man for love alone, she cannot be legally defined as a prostitute, *even though the man may afterwards have given her money*. Which may be the reason why sometimes persons have been mulcted of sums of money in payment of compensation, when it has been proved that they had referred, in the hearing of others, to some woman as “a common prostitute” who in the legal meaning was indulging in “wild love” only.

According to Messaline, there are several varieties of *demi-mondaines*. One variety consists of what can best be described as amateur prostitutes of the upper classes—their patrons must first and foremost belong to the nobility or the aristocracy, who pay the rents of their houses, all living and clothing expenses, and no doubt secretly give them money as well. On the Continent, such women are to be seen at all the principal race meetings, at charitable bazaar, big public balls and receptions in the boxes of the theatres, at the most fashionable of the seaside resorts. They

are always beautifully dressed and generally can hardly if at all be distinguished from the ordinary and 'respectable' fashionable and society folk with whom they mix. Usually they are women of considerable culture and not infrequently originators of new fashions in dress and deportment. As someone said once—"the 'respectable' women entertain their lovers in the daytime only, the *demi mondaines* during the night also."

Another variety embraces the *grandes cocottes* who for the most part reserve their charms for the very highest in the land and so are on a higher "social" level than the ordinary *demi mondaines*. In days gone by the *grandes cocottes* entered largely into the secret political life of their country and so directly helped to rule the nation to which they belonged. Possibly some may do so still though this seems doubtful. In Paris they lived mostly in such fashionable districts as the Quartier Marboeuf and the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne where they often attracted the attention of Russian Grand Dukes, Indian Nabobs and American millionaires. Yet another variety consists of the women mostly 'self made' who never openly practise prostitution and who limit the number of their lovers chiefly members of the *bourgeoisie* to three or four. And finally there is the class known as 'international women' who as often as not are adventuresses as well and frequently are financed by swell crooks and confidence men.

who travel with them from capital to capital over the whole of Europe, occasionally taking them across the ocean and plying their profession in its various branches while on the voyage. The mode of existence of the last-named, though in a sense precarious, often secures for them a life of luxury—while it lasts. All this and much more Messaline told me.

## CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH

It is commonly said that because prostitution is the oldest profession in the world, it can never be abolished. Messaline was not of that opinion. She believed that a day would come in the far off future when prostitution would no longer flourish. Men and women as a body would combine to put an end to professional prostitution if all could be made to see, early in their lives, what it led to. "All they need is instruction and enlightenment," she used to say, "for with enlightenment will come knowledge of all that is happening in this connection, and once that is generally known amongst all classes of all the nations, public feeling the world over will combine, and so become too strong to resist. That is what is going to bring about the universal abandonment of prostitution throughout the civilized world—international understanding and international measures. And if I say so you ought to believe it. At the same time man will always seek woman—wild love."

It is generally supposed that the curious huskiness in the voices of street prostitutes is the result of constant exposure to inclement weather, the result also of too much alcohol and too much smoking. Messaline assured me

that it was nothing of the sort. "Many of the street women," she said, "don't go out in bad weather, and comparatively few of them regularly drink or smoke to excess. Those queer voices of theirs are directly produced by *their mode of living, their profession*. Any doctor who has had much to do with such women will bear me out. And that odd expression in their eyes—they all get it after a year or so on the streets—is also brought about by their calling. I have heard people say it came from their looking at men so ardently! Actually it is a physical effect, easily explainable if you go into the matter closely."

She went into the matter closely, too closely for me to dare to put into print just what she said. But it was interesting and had never occurred to me before. Indeed a far more interesting book than this is could be written, in no way pornographic or even suggestive, if our law-makers were less hypocritical. As certain laws stand to-day, to impart knowledge of a particular and very useful kind is regarded as criminal. Yet if these things were generally known an immense amount of evil could and would be guarded against by young and middle aged people who at present run grave risks through being unsophisticated.

Asked from what classes of the community street prostitutes were mostly recruited, Messaline replied at once, "very largely from among maidservants, certainly in the towns, in the country there is so much free love that



prostitution for payment is much less common." According to statistics in her possession, of the three thousand maidservants in Leipzig alone, a few years ago, no fewer than one thousand were engaged in prostitution, some of it what she called "supplementary prostitution," meaning that they combined the two ways of making money. In England, she said, the proportion of maidservants thus supplementing their wages was considerably lower, owing probably to the rule which obtains in most hotels, boarding-houses and private houses that the maidservants must be home by a comparatively early hour, often as early as nine or ten o'clock at night. Also in England, she declared, maidservants are better looked after, better paid, and treated with greater consideration than in most of the Continental countries.

True prostitution is the direct outcome of crowded population in large cities, though a generation or two ago even quite small towns had their "women houses," the existence of which was sanctioned by law, as the houses in some of the Continental countries are to-day. At that period eating and drinking and the other thing were looked upon as three natural appetites which must of necessity be gratified if men and women were to continue to live in comfort and harmony. But by degrees various loathsome diseases began to spread, and on this being attributed, no doubt rightly, to promiscuous prostitution in these houses, and the

doctors finding themselves unable to combat the diseases, the houses were gradually suppressed. Yet even to day in some of the Continental cities the disease has increased in greater proportion than the population, so that steps are now being taken to discover whether or no the licensed brothels are responsible. Theoretically the existence of properly regulated houses of this sort ought to help to stamp out the disease. In practice in some countries, the houses have helped to spread it.

That a proportion of womankind are born prostitutes as others are born with peculiar vices of various sorts or with exceptional mental gifts is well known. Such women Messaline said are born in all ranks of life and can no more change those attributes than they can change their physical features. And that is why the well meaning but ignorant or illogical folk who look upon all women who give themselves to men unconditionally, as sinners or as criminals, are so unwise. As well blame a born dipsomaniac for his complete and constitutional inability to resist alcohol. The born prostitute has usually several rudimentary characteristics which become noticeable even during her early childhood. One is mendacity another is idleness another greediness another selfishness and another perhaps the strongest of all is an innate love of finery. Vanity she will have too but then most normal women are vain and none but the most puritanical will take

exception to their being vain, for, after all, vanity is but a laudable desire to appear to the best advantage in the eyes of others. A woman devoid of vanity is like a man devoid of ambition. Both having no interest in themselves, will in all probability end by entirely neglecting their personal appearance and allowing themselves to go to pieces physically, some times mentally as well. In this connection it is interesting to bear in mind that not one in mate out of fifty in our asylums ever takes the slightest interest in his or her personal appearance or has any regard for personal cleanliness. In addition the born prostitute is invariably wholly devoid of the moral sense, a defect attributable to what doctors call "the stigmata of degeneration." Yet, curiously enough often born prostitutes are the off spring of normal stock.

The class of prostitute she went on to tell me, created through economic conditions—that is to say driven to prostitution through inability to earn a livelihood in any other way and thus avoid starvation—is rarely vicious by nature. She becomes vicious through necessity and not from choice. She will tell you quite openly and with truth that she detests the whole business that she loathes and despises men that she would give much to be able to abandon her calling and earn her living by honest means. But there are no honest means open to her, particularly after she has actually become a prostitute. There are still people

who are firmly convinced that a prostitute must necessarily be deprived in every other way, that she must be addicted to drink, foul tongued, and ready to steal should the opportunity present itself. But all that is quite wrong as regards economic prostitutes as a body. Most of them rarely have money enough to spend on drink. Comparatively few are foul tongued, though they hear enough foul language from men to make them so. And dishonesty is by no means always co-existent with fornication even amongst women hard put to it to get food. Messaline gave me many instances of cases which had come under her own observation, to prove this.

It was during the War, again, that she assured me that the sudden influx of amateur prostitutes since the War had started threatened to interfere seriously with the occupation of the "professionals". I met her again on several occasions after the armistice and then she told me that the ranks of the amateurs still continued to increase that the War seemed to have turned the morals of the at one time moral topsyturvy.

"I never remember anything like it" I remember her saying. The class of girl who before the War would have recoiled at the bare idea of allowing any man to take liberties with her or even kiss her, now thinks nothing of letting even men she has only just met go the full length. And they have such knowledge, too! God knows where they get it all. Cer

tainly they know enough never to let any man get them into trouble, they know exactly where to draw the line, and how. Even I am astonished though, like you, I thought long ago that nothing was left in life that could surprise me. How has it all come about? Well, I should say that the enormous spread in the popularity of dancing and the great increase in the number of dance halls of every description are largely responsible. You see, there are lots of dance halls where a girl can hire a male partner for a trifling sum sometimes engage him merely for the asking halls which in reality are run merely to bring young men and women together for the purpose of immorality. It is the first step that counts and when a girl has once taken advantage of the possibility offered and found that she is none the worse and that nobody is any the wiser she naturally does it again and then again and so it goes on. I truly believe that is the reason so many girls now shy away from marriage. They find they can without difficulty obtain much that marriage offers so why marry and lose their liberty and encumber themselves? In some dance halls a girl can get another girl as partner in the same way, if she dislikes men, and you know what that often leads to in girls of that disposition.

She liked introducing me to her girls and women particularly to new arrivals whose appearance and conversation she thought would interest me. And generally these

women did interest me. They talked almost entirely about themselves, and in some ways were amusingly unsophisticated. The War intrigued them not at all. There might not have been a war in progress for all they seemed to care, save now and again when one or other of them had a "great friend" in the trenches. Even then their anxiety for his safety turned chiefly on the fact that if he were killed the supply of money he had been in the habit of remitting would cease! They had no idea what we were fighting about. Some of them thought we must be a foolish nation to waste our men's lives in defence of a country that didn't belong to us. Many of them hoped the War would go on, provided that France won it in the end. The War brought grist to the mill so far as they were concerned. And supposing Germany did win, I remember one of them saying, would it matter much? The Germans had plenty of money. They spent much money on women—yes, she had been in Berlin and she knew. The conversation of some of them came near to being pathetic.

One woman I met in this way had made no small reputation as a writer of novels—not erotic novels. She said it was due to her writing these novels that she had come to this. Writing so much about love had gradually stirred, inflamed her imagination. Erotic visions had come to her, particularly after a long spell of literary work. Unmarried, she had felt the urge to experience for herself what

she had been writing about day after day. In the end she had done so—she had picked out a partner in a dance-hall in Vienna, and he had seduced her. It was in order that he might seduce her that she had selected him. But he had not satisfied her. So she had sought out another man, and then another, and then a fourth. The passion thus kindled had increased and increased. It had become an obsession. She had deliberately given up writing and let her thoughts dwell upon the evil. Finally, reduced to poverty, she had come voluntarily to the house where Messaline introduced me to her.

I thought her case particularly interesting, and questioned a mental specialist about it. He replied that she was by no means exceptional. He had himself known of similar cases, among men as well as women. "One's imagination," he said, "can be inflamed in that way much more easily than you may suppose. All literary people, painters, actors and actresses, and to a lesser extent musicians, have peculiarly sensitive imaginations. In whatever direction they let their imagination wander, in that direction it will incline to wander, and each time it wanders it will be drawn more powerfully in that particular direction. That is why actors and actresses who play night after night the same *rôle* for months on end sometimes come to imagine that they are, actually, the character they are impersonating. In any of the homes for worn-

out or destitute stage people you will find inmates who firmly believe they are the characters they used to play. It is the same with religious mania. A man or a woman naturally very religious will sometimes allow imagination to dwell so deeply and so incessantly on things religious that they come to imagine themselves to be some saint or other whose lives they have studied very deeply and whose example they have for years striven to emulate. That is why it is always dangerous for such people to have but one interest in life and to concentrate their thoughts upon it. Every man or woman of that type ought to divide his or her attention and have several interests if possible. The inmates of asylums who believe themselves to be Rockefellers or Rothschilds or Pierpont Morgans or even ordinary millionaires—and many do—are mostly men of highly imaginative nature who have concentrated unduly on amassing vast fortunes.”



## CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH

A THING that amused me immensely was Messaline's suggestion made to me one day in all seriousness that she should allow me to invest money in one of her houses of ill-fame! She knew quite well my opinion of her odious business, yet honestly believed that she was conferring a favour by making me that offer. And the reason she made it, she added, was that she liked my "*genre*"—whatever she may have meant by that. I suppose I ought to have felt proud at having incurred the esteem of the most notorious procuress in Europe! When, as politely as possible, I declined her offer—her suggestion that she should make me an accessory to professional prostitution—she still pressed the point by proving to me how profitable the traffic was, a fact I already knew and therefore did not attempt to dispute. Indeed the profits shown even by our own virtuous (by comparison) Empire Theatre in London when that "breeding ground of syphilis," as a famous West End doctor once called it, was in its heyday, were not inconsiderable. Yet what columns of sentimental newspaper slush were slopped over "the dear old house" (*sic*) when the place was pulled down last year. For how many hundreds, possibly thousands of our

youth in the Nineties and until the War broke were ruined in health through the women they met there! Indeed retired doctors to day will tell you that the Empire more than any similar place of entertainment in London with a prostitutes' promenade spread the dread disease up and down England and even much farther afield Mrs Ormiston Chant nicknamed Prude on the Prowl did absolutely right when she tried to get the Empire promenade suppressed

One day when looking through her elaborate letter files Messaline showed me letters written by *demi mondaines* professional prostitutes and amateur prostitutes and drew my attention to the remarkable similarity in the different handwritings It really was rather extraordinary and went far to prove that people of that mentality develop of course unconsciously the same style of caligraphy In almost every letter the writing was large and flowing and curly while in the *demi mondaines* letters the signature was invariably larger than the rest of the writing and often there were flourishes under or around it In no single instance was the handwriting small or neat Letters written by women whom she knew to be degenerates or addicts to strange vices were different again Such writing she aptly described as *bizarre* Great sprawling writing it was in most of the letters with three or four words stretched right across a page and *always* sloping downwards from

left to right. It was writing which, once seen, could never afterwards be forgotten. Messaline declared that she could generally gauge the character of any correspondent from her, or his, handwriting alone; she did not always need to set eyes on the writer. And that, she said, she had found most useful when considering letters written by strangers in reply to her newspaper advertisements. She did not trouble to answer letters when the handwriting showed clearly that the writers had not the temperament that would qualify them for the purposes for which she needed them.

Since then I have been shown letters written by inmates confined in one of our asylums owing to their lack of sexual control or their irrepressible vicious tendencies of a sexual nature, and the resemblance their handwriting bore to that of Messaline's correspondents was very marked. An interesting fact told to me by the medical superintendent of that asylum was that many years prior to these inmates becoming mentally deranged, their handwriting, though apparently quite different, had nevertheless betrayed the characteristics which later became so noticeable. "Any experienced and observant physician in charge of an asylum," he said, "can often prophesy, after studying sane persons' handwritings, that one day some of those sane persons will become more or less mentally deranged.

"And I believe that one day," he added, "handwriting will be closely studied by psy-

chologists who mean to specialise in the treatment of mental diseases. Even it is possible that the knowledge obtained through such study may enable physicians to advise a course of treatment which will prove effectual in destroying in its incipient stages the source of the disease which threatens or arrest the development of this or that inborn vice.

On the subject of blackmail Messaline had much to say. The net of the blackmailers she assured me, is spread over every European country far wider than most people would believe and in other continents too. In some of the big cities the blackmailing of degenerates of a particular type and of addicts to certain vices is systematically organized by little groups of men and women. And once the net has closed over the luckless victim his sole chance of extricating himself is by *never under any circumstances* consenting to pay them one farthing. Let him accede to their demands only once and he is lost—they won't then loosen their grip until they have bled him of all the money he possesses.

'Face a blackmailer boldly,' she said with warmth. 'Defy him—I have done it often. Tell him to do whatever he threatens but that not one penny will you pay him. In most cases if he finds that his victim is firm and determined and not afraid to run the risk of exposure whether guilty or not he will go no further. Even if he should carry out his threat, the authorities in every country are

now ranged against his class and will do their best to aid the victim. You see, the authorities are many of them men of the world whose past has not been wholly blameless—I could tell you some stories about such people that would astonish you!—and they know well how weak human nature is and how easily a slip can be made even by a man or a woman ordinarily of the greatest moral rectitude

“Another type of blackmailer,” she explained, “is the individual who works single-handed or with only one accomplice. Such people, though out for smaller gains, are just as dangerous in their way as the scoundrels who work in groups. They, too, can be defied however, and must be if their plans are to be frustrated. Sometimes people say—‘But why give anybody an opportunity of levying blackmail? Do nothing that is wrong, and you must be safe.’ That may sound reasonable, but it is not. A wholly innocent person can on occasions be blackmailed just as effectually as a guilty person. And blackmailers, remember, are drawn from all classes, and the better educated and better bred a blackmailer is, the more dangerous he is likely to prove. Some of these men and women are received in society, and go on being received until by some fortunate chance they become revealed in their true colours.”

Among the many instances of blackmail which she related was one concerning a British officer of high rank. Well known in English

and Continental society and in particular in diplomatic circles, he suddenly sent in his papers, sold his house and his horses and left England abruptly, saying that he had been ordered abroad for his health, though none of his friends or acquaintances had ever heard that anything was amiss with his health.

Three years later he died in a cottage in an obscure village in Ireland, penniless. It then transpired, though the news of course never got into the papers, that blackmailers had stripped him bit by bit of everything he possessed. Had the crime with which they charged him ever been made public he would have been disgraced in the eyes of society and shunned by everybody he had known, and sooner than face that ignominy he had paid his accusers.

Another case had reference to an attractive married woman aged about thirty, who also was a familiar figure in London Society, and whose husband's jealousy was known to be inordinate. The husband was rich. The woman, when she married him, was very poor. One day the husband had to leave London on a matter of business, but said that he would be back in two days.

Towards five o'clock on the day he had left home his wife received a telegram. It was signed by her husband (apparently) and had been handed in in the town that he had gone to. It told her that his partner's brother—whom she had never seen—would call in the

evening to examine some important documents which were in his study, and that as he lived on the other side of London she had better ask him to stay to dinner

Soon after seven a man called. He was middle aged, well groomed and apparently a gentleman. He had seen Mr —— in the morning, he told her, naming her husband, so that when she pressed him to stay to dinner he evinced no surprise

It was nearly nine before he said he must set to work on the documents. Then Mrs —— retired, leaving the visitor alone in the study, as he had said it might take him two hours or more to go through the papers. He had added that he would let himself out when he had finished

About six o'clock next morning the woman awoke with a start. The visitor was seated in her room, dressed just as she had left him the night before in the study. Her first impulse was to scream, but, controlling herself, she inquired as calmly as she could why he had not left the house and how he dared come into her bedroom

By way of reply, he coolly unfolded his plot. He was a perfect stranger to her husband, he said, and the telegram she had received had not been sent by her husband, but by himself. Nor did her husband suspect that he was in the house with her and had spent the night there. He would quickly be informed of the fact, however—and the servants would cor

roborate it if necessary—if she did not then and there pay him a large sum of money, which he said he knew to be in the safe. The telegram he had sent to her he had found in her room and destroyed.

Then, unfortunately, the woman lost her head. Had she reflected for an instant she would have realised that even though the telegram had been destroyed proof of its having been sent and received could easily be obtained at the post office. So in her terror she foolishly unlocked the safe and gave him all the gold and notes which it contained. Then the man went away.

To enable her to make good the sum he had taken she went out that very day and sold a considerable part of her jewellery. Not until two years afterwards was the man arrested on another charge of blackmail. The woman saw his portrait in the newspapers and recognised it at once. Even then however she had not the courage to tell her husband what had happened in his absence so long before.

We were talking about Japan one day, and Messaline then told me that at one time she had held an interest in the famous Number Nine house in Yokohama. I was interested because I had once visited that house—in a sense it is one of the sights of Yokohama which most men go to see on the occasion of their first landing in Japan.

And an extraordinary place it is. Generally there are no fewer than two hundred girls



there every evening, of almost every nationality, though most of them obviously have Japanese blood in their veins. You find them assembled in one large room, chattering, laughing, and sometimes dancing, and you make your selection and take her away to one of the private rooms which surround and overlook the big quadrangle where the baths are. Messaline told me the reason she surrendered her interest in the place was that it did not pay. Oh yes, the girls were all right, but many of the visitors who came in and enjoyed themselves afterwards refused to pay, and there was no way of getting the money from them. Attempts to make them pay in advance had proved a failure.

Much as I loathed the woman in most respects, there were times when her talk so engrossed me that I felt I almost liked her. And her views on some points were sound. On the subject of sexual abstinence, for instance, much that she said was true enough.

"You conventional, 'respectable,' folk," she would say, speaking seriously, 'still make futile jokes about 'old maids' as you call them, you are inclined to sneer at them and hold them up to ridicule. Yet if one of those unmarried women, unable longer to withstand the urge of nature, does what you men do twenty times without the slightest hesitation, and has the misfortune to become pregnant—my God what an outcry there is amongst the whole crowd of her so-called friends, men as well as women!

The poor creature is looked upon thenceforward as infamous an outcast, a leper. She is hounded out of the place she has lived in all her life, as often as not, pointed at, jeered at. Women who possibly are not one quarter as good a woman as she is—many of them, you may be sure, have done just the same but have guarded against the risk of discovery or of motherhood—draw their skirts away when she approaches lest accidental contact with her should contaminate them. They heap abuse on her; they vilify her in every way they can. That is bad enough, cruel enough, hypocritical enough, but when men who as likely as not have deliberately seduced virgins join in the hue and cry. Oh, you people make me sick, some of you.

“And after all, where is the monstrous harm? Aren't we all born with the sexual impulse more or less strong in us? And isn't it a natural impulse? Were we given that feeling, those desires by nature, yet meant to live all through our lives without gratifying them even once? There are millions of unmarried women to day up and down civilized Europe who for one reason or another will never be able to marry, and according to your recognized code that enormous population must forever be debarred from indulging in one of life's greatest pleasures must restrain their natural passion, secretly eat their hearts out in yearning and misery. Do you call that right? Is it just? Is there any sense at all in it? Do

you suppose for one moment that women were meant to suffer like that, to live, as I say, in compulsory celibacy?"

I tried to argue the point, but she went on

"Surely you can see for yourself that the great majority of the middle aged unmarried women you meet every day are secretly suffering, though I admit that some unmarried women, married women, too, for that matter, are sexless in the sense that they have no passion, no desire. Again, look at the women who, though ostensibly 'respectable' do indulge their passion secretly. Don't they look happier than those poor, love starved creatures? Aren't they generally more contented, more cheerful? You don't need to have studied men and women as I have all my life to see that what I say is true. You should see women who have become patrons of some of my houses and the change that has come over them since they took what they now laughingly call 'the fatal step'. They are greatly altered and many of them tell me that their friends tell them they 'cannot think what has come over them'. Nothing has 'come over them' of course. It is merely that they have satisfied one of the great demands of nature. Yet you conventional people would—if you knew the truth—declare that they were breaking nature's law!

"A belief I have held for years is that sexual abstinence the persistent fight against nature is directly responsible for one half of the

/ nervous diseases which we read and hear so much about to day. It leads, too, to vices which are evil and against nature for certain chemical substances called by doctors 'sexual toxins' then become present in the body, and while they remain give rise to high and increasing blood pressure, causing mental depression, irritability, insomnia and much else. Try to oppose nature and she will avenge herself sooner or later. I know what I am talking about."

Those were her views, almost exactly as she expressed them, and I give them for what they are worth.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

ON the subject of undue indulgence in alcohol, Messaline held strong views. Alcohol, in her opinion, was the greatest curse of the day and indirectly to blame for the great spread of venereal diseases. For street women afflicted with the disease accosted men under the influence of drink, knowing that such men no longer had will power or any sort of self-control, so that they were easy prey. And for various reasons, which I cannot here go into, a man in that state ran a far greater risk of infection, she said than a man in full possession of his senses. Indeed, she was almost in favour of prohibition—though not in her houses, where her profits from the sale of drink were considerable.

‘A drunken man is a sot!’ she exclaimed with vehemence, ‘and I have no use for sots. Drink never did any man or woman any good, generally it does them a lot more harm than most people imagine. As soon as they begin to take it too freely. You say that I encourage vice, but what I encourage I don’t call vice when it is done in the right way. No patron of any house of mine need ever contract illness unless through his own fault. For I have always prided myself on the physical condition and the

constitutional soundness of every woman I control."

Then she went on to talk of the class of men spoken of commonly as "Don Juans." She detested the whole race of them, she declared. What were they, what had they ever been in history but a crowd of animals wholly devoid of any of the finer feelings, who looked upon women merely as a lot of creatures to be got the better of, as often as not by violence, and then thrown aside. Don Juans! Why, they had not the most elementary knowledge of what the word love meant! At heart most of them had a deep contempt for all women if they didn't actually hate the sex. Casanovas, Werthers—ah they were different. *They* were the world's really great lovers. Casanova, Werther, and other heroic lovers in history had studied women, analyzed them, entered into their deepest inmost feelings, sympathized with them, understood them thoroughly and known how to make true love to them and women by the score had loved them devotedly passionately in return and granted them every favour they had craved. They had not assaulted women, taken them by brute force. To Don Juans "love" had been much less an affair of passion than one of pride and of the gratification at their consciousness of power and what woman, however debased, wanted that?

Women, all women except perhaps those belonging to some of the savage tribes, re-

sponded to tenderness, affection, consideration, generosity. The alleged love of women for "cave men" was a figment of some men's imagination, at any rate so far back as she could remember. Rough and uncouth and foul tongued and brutal men had never, she was convinced, appealed to any women of any class or type to be found in a civilized community. Women had to endure such men, of course, but they endured them only under compulsion.

"The sexual impulse is, in every possible way, influenced, increased, elaborated and complicated by the civilization of the present day," she said on another occasion. "Go into any big town and you will see that for yourself. There is immorality in plenty in the country and in villages but it is very different from the mass immorality of the towns. In the country and other sparsely populated districts young men—old men, too, for that matter—may get girls into trouble now and again but their minds are not crammed day and night with sexual thoughts, as the minds of a very big section of town dwellers are. Yet the big towns are commonly looked upon as the centres of the highest civilization.

"I am a whole hearted believer in thought transference and massed thought condensation and it is this thought condensation which affects the thoughts of others who come within its radius of activity. They inhale it mentally if I may so express myself, get caught up in it, and then their thoughts too soon become part

of it. Apart from that in the towns so much is done to foster the sexual impulse. In the shop windows in many of the big Continental cities in particular, erotic pictures are displayed and in some of these shops obscene photographs can still be bought, as I have already said. In the side streets pornographic literature is exposed for sale in the same way or there are indications that it can be obtained if would be purchasers ask for it. The theatres, too and the music halls with stage performances with thinly veiled verbal innuendo and scantily draped women, approach as near the sexual as they dare, knowing that by doing so their drawing powers will be greater. Again, in the chief streets women are everywhere who at a glance will sell their charms to any reasonable bidder and in some countries even the street hoardings do their bit to stimulate the sexual impulse. Also though you get free love or as it is sometimes called wild love in the country, you don't get mass prostitution. In the towns you get little else.

She had read Schopenhauer, studied him could quote long extracts from his work. She admired the obscene writings of Mirabeau and Cleland's pornographic "Woman of Pleasure" and the sexual garbage of Crebillon, Grecoart and Voltaire. She had a set of the wonderfully clever and dreadful outline drawings of the famous Japanese artist, Hosokari and much else of the same nature. Actors and actresses and all persons associated



with the stage are said to be able to talk of nothing but the theatre and all that has to do with it, but Messaline outstripped them all in regard to talking 'shop'—her "shop." And how could it have been otherwise? Almost from infancy she had given full rein to her passions, dwelt and battened upon vicious thoughts, spent the whole of her life of villainy in a sexual entourage, centered her thoughts on the acquisition of wealth by spreading prostitution filled her mind with literature of a revolting type. For her to have been interested in aught else would manifestly have been impossible.

No, I am wrong. The study of ethnology interested her, of the science according to the dictionary, which treats of the division of man into races their origin relations and differences. On that question she had all sorts of distorted ideas and theories. She honestly believed for instance that two distinct races of beings had in bygone ages been co-existent the human race and the ape race that these two races had interbred and that apes and humans had two lines of common ancestry. One line of hybrids produced human beings, the other line apes.

"If only life were longer," she said once "how thrilling it would be to experiment in the breeding of humans in the same way that animals are bred the crossing of individuals both possessing this or that characteristic or mental gift or physical peculiarity or perverse

instinct or passion, then to watch them grow up, all the time noting the increase or otherwise in the traits possessed by their parents; then breed again from the same stock in the same way and see what happened. Unfortunately we should, by the time the third or fourth generation arrived, ourselves be too old to be able to take further interest."

Another theory she advanced was that there is no fundamental difference in the psychical sphere of men and women, or in the sexual sphere either—an opinion now held by many doctors, and scientists too. Nor, she maintained, does the spiritual nature differ in the sexes. On these matters she would talk at great length, finally declaring that in the centuries to come we should see a human race composed largely of hermaphrodites yet able to procreate children—she indicated the gradual development to-day of masculine faculties in women and of feminine faculties in men as a point in favour of her argument.

Once, when discussing this subject—or rather, enlarging upon it, for I always preferred to listen to her than to talk—she told me some remarkable stories of changes which she said she had herself noticed in the physical formation of certain inmates of several of her houses. There were women, she averred, whose very features had in the course of a year or two become entirely transformed. Not the dreadful transformation brought about by

their calling and their mode of life, of which I have already spoken, but a gradual change from female to male in outward appearance, manner, mode of conduct, even in timbre of the voice

Sometimes their very natures changed, as though in sympathy. A woman essentially feminine, easily led or over-persuaded, attached to and attracted by all that usually attracts women—dress and so forth—would, as her features grew hard, her manner brusque and abrupt, her voice harsh and a note or two deeper, unaccountably lose all interest in those things to which she had formerly been drawn, and presently turn her attention to matters which usually interest only men. Men changed, too, sometimes, when middle-aged, but only men of the type immorally employed in her houses, and such men of course were mostly abnormalities or they would not have been there.

After the War, and when French and British civilians began to penetrate into Germany again I tried to induce Messaline to take me to the castle in the forest where her extraordinary career had begun. But nothing would induce her to. It was not my intention to record the story of her life until after her death—I knew her to be suffering from an affliction which would eventually prove fatal—but I particularly wanted to see with my own eyes the wonderful old place hidden away in the heart of that German forest, which had

for so long served as a clearing house for human souls

But she would not take me there. The castle had of course been deserted during the War but she still owned it, she said. It had been occupied for months by German troops, who had done untold damage to the property and left it in a state of dilapidation. She loved the place and hoped one day to live there again, but—

She indicated the seat of her trouble. How could she tell whether the *bon Dieu* might not think fit to take her soon?

It was hard not to smile when she said that. The idea of the *bon Dieu* wanting to take such a woman was unconsciously humorous. Besides, she had professed not to believe in the existence of any God.

Though I had been compelled to see Messaline so often during the War, it had been my intention to have nothing more to say to her after the War was over. But what conventional folk call "undesirable acquaintances" have a way of worming themselves into one's life, and when the time came for me to part from the woman, I found it difficult to cut her entirely out.

Always moving about the country, many countries she would bob up at one's hotel quite unexpectedly, and remain. And always she would have some plausible reason for remaining. Fortunately nothing in her dress or appearance or demeanour was in the least *outré* or

calculated to betray the nature of her "profession." After the War, indeed, she dressed for awhile almost dowdily.

"You don't mind being seen with me in a public place like this, which surprises me," she said one afternoon as we sat in the lounge of the best hotel in Manchester. "But then you have so many 'queer' friends"

"Why should I mind?" I asked.

"Well, perhaps you forget that thousands—literally thousands—of people know me and all about me and would recognize me at once if they saw me. Only in the south of France, where, under another name, I go into society, I am not known. Even your police know me—some of them. They have my photograph"

"And your finger-prints?" I laughed

She turned upon me. Her face was flaming.

"Who told you that?" she gasped.

"You have practically told me so yourself—now. I didn't know before"

She looked hard at me to see if I lied. Then her anger vanished. She smiled

"I can read you like a book," she said "You couldn't deceive me if you tried. Now, your saying that, has reminded me of something that might interest you. You'll be able to put it in that book you are going to write about me when I am dead—and you may not have to wait long."

"How do you know that I am going to write a book about you?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

“Do you suppose I haven’t known all along the reason you have been getting me to tell you all the story of my life? You were a writer before the War, and once a writer always a writer. I have met men like you before—*écrivains*. Women too. You people stick at nothing. You would assassinate your own parents to make an exciting story for your dreadful newspapers. Ah, *les journaux*! How I detest them! The harm they have done me. The lies they have printed about me, those *rédacteurs*!”

“What was the story you were going to tell me?”

“Listen, I will tell it to you now. Order me a cocktail—I like your *cocktails Anglais*, they are ravishing.”

And when the cocktails had been brought, she went on.

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH

"You know the City of Buenos Aires—you have told me so. Do you know Monsch's restaurant? Well, that was where I met him."

"Who?"

"The creature I am going to tell you about. He was a beautiful young man—twenty-seven I should say, not more. Tall, straight, English, always beautifully dressed, with nice hair—the sort of hair I like in men. You have it not, oh, but not at all. And his eyes! But they were wonderful—a deep blue grey which looked different always in different lights, now light, now dark, now a sort of purple, fair hair and dark eyebrows, it is *merveilleux* in a man, in a handsome man like that—deep blue eyes—"

"We'll give his eyes and eyebrows a miss, if you don't mind," I interrupted. "They don't interest me, particularly as I am so unlike him. Won't you stop describing him and get on with the story?"

Again she shrugged.

"*Comme tu veux. Tu est jaloux—toi?*"

Then with a laugh she continued.

"I met him at Monsch's. He sat at supper at a table close to mine. I was young, too, then. Twenty five. I had just opened a new

house in a street at the back of the Club de Residentes Estrangeros. He had looked across at me often during supper. Near the end of supper I smiled at him.

"At once he got up and came over.

" 'May I sit here?' he said with a quite charming smile, and his voice—"

"Do go on with the story," I interrupted again.

"He took the chair facing mine, and we began to talk. All the time his eyes were fixed on mine—such blue, blue eyes—and I stared back into them. We had some wine—he ordered it, champagne. For an hour, quite, we stayed there talking, and looking hard at each other. Each knew what the other wanted, but neither liked to be the first to speak—don't you find that is sometimes so? *Figures vous, I—I felt timide!*

"We met again next day, and the day after, and the day after that. If ever I loved any body in my life I loved that young man with the fair hair and the dark eyebrows and the big, speaking, *étincelant* blue eyes. And I suppose it was because of that that I said nothing and that he said nothing. But that strain could not last.

"One night after supper he came up to my rooms in the hotel. Directly the door of the sitting room had closed and we were alone we fell into each other's arms. That moment! I shall never forget it. As long as I live I shall never forget it!"



She gulped down her cocktail and I ordered another.

Then suddenly her expression changed. The soft, almost sentimental look that had increased in intensity in her eyes while she had been speaking, faded, and an evil—a horribly evil, I can see it still—look came into them.

"After that—soon after that, he tired of me. He knew nothing about me or why I was in Buenos Aires, but I had discovered from his talk that he knew all the worst parts of the city—and, *mon Dieu*, in Buenos Aires they are bad! That Paseo district, that Boca district. . . .

"When I found that out I went mad, I think. My great passion, my love, whatever it was turned to the most intense hatred. But he did not suspect it, he did not suspect anything, and when we met I was to him as usual. But I was going to be avenged.

"I have many drugs, as you know—no, I have told you I don't deal in dope, and never have. But one drug I have. . . . It is part yohimbin riedel, and with it are other drugs—three. They are mixed in a curious way. Its effect—well, it is extraordinary. Few know about it, fortunately.

"One afternoon in Calle Bartolomé-Mitré I met—this young Englishman. With him was a girl. I knew her. She was one of my own girls—my decoys. Of course in a public place like that the girl and I were strangers.

That was always understood. He introduced us.

"That evening I visited the girl, saw her in private. She, that girl, was my rival in the affections of the Englishman to whom I had given myself. One of my own girls my rival! It was unthinkable! Did the Englishman attract her, I asked?

"She smiled. His money attracted her, nothing else, she declared. And he had given her much money. He visited her at the house newly opened by me. That was farcical. Too stupid. But it was well. In that house of my own it would be more easy to carry-out my revenge.

"Secretly I gave her some of the drug. She must let nobody see it, I impressed upon her. Nobody at all. It is a strange drug, wonderful but terrible. There is nothing like it anywhere. It increases passion almost to madness, sometimes quite to madness, when you inject it in the arm or chest with a needle syringe. She was to inject it into him—first a little, next day more, and so it would go on.

"In the days which followed I watched the Englishman closely—we had *déjeuner* together each morning. Yes, the drug was acting, I could see that. His eyes shone more than they had done. He was restless, nervous, and each morning got more so. And all the while his thoughts were far from me. Whenever I spoke about the girl I had met him with in Calle Bartolomé-Mitré he at once looked quite

different and became all attention, very much interested. He would have liked to talk to me about her, tell me all about her, talk of nothing else all through *déjeuner*, but he had sense to know I should be jealous past belief, and he had self-restraint enough to talk of other things.

"And the action of the drug increased. It was stirring his passion for her, already naturally so great, to the point where it would overcome him entirely and overwhelm the self-control still left to him.

"That point was reached one evening when I was with him. He was in my sitting room—I had induced him to come up with me and dine with me there—and the light in his eyes was now extraordinary. His fingers twitched all the time and when he raised his glass he was so unsteady that he spilled some of his wine. So absent-minded too that he heard nothing that I said to him and answered all at random.

"We had hardly finished dinner, when suddenly he sprang up.

"‘I must go,’ he exclaimed in a voice that was feverish. ‘I must go at once.’

"‘But where?’ I asked. ‘Why?’

"‘Oh never mind why—damn you!’

"Never before had he sworn at me.

"‘Some woman, I suppose?’ I sneered.

"He turned on me like a fury, and the look in his eyes made me step back from him.

"‘Yes, it is a woman!’ he almost shouted.

'It is the girl you met me with the girl you have just spoken about—Hortense I don't know what has happened to me since I met her, but she has got me so that I can't keep from her, can think only of her, day and night I see her in my imagination and my dreams there before me wanting me, wanting me and I—oh, I must go, I must go to her now or in a minute I shall be mad and they'll take me away to an asylum'

"'Messaline! Messaline!' he suddenly cried out, clutching me tight, as if trying to cling to me to prevent being dragged away by some unseen force I was terribly frightened at that moment I knew all about the drug but had not imagined it could be so potent as all that And in those moments I regretted—bitterly regretted what I had done, and I held him tight, suddenly hoping that I might be able to prevent his going to her while in that state for I knew well what the end would be if he did I no longer hated him then believe me I was no longer jealous—his terrible condition had killed the jealousy in me, and all I wanted now was to save him

"All at once he hit me a terrible blow in the face, and I reeled backward half stunned It was the blow of a madman Never in his normal state would he have hit any woman no matter how great the provocation—he was not that sort—he was a *gentilhomme* if there ever was one and—'

She stopped speaking and covered her face

with her hands and burst into an agony of sobs. During all the time I had known her I had never seen her betray a sign of weakness, and I had thought her incapable of it, utterly hard in that respect. We were alone in the lounge. For the first time in my life I felt compassion, I pitied her. So after all, in spite of her terrible life, there was some sort of soul in her somewhere.

After some minutes she began to recover.

"*Forgive me*," she whispered, looking at me with kind eyes. "It is stupid ears. . . . And I thought I had never before told that story over. You must never repeat it. You promise?"

When she was herself again, I felt a curiosity.

"If you would sooner not," I

asked, "but I should like to know what happened."

"*Tiens?* I did not tell you? I did not end the story? Let me, then

"After striking me he seized his hat and dashed out of the room, and I heard him running away along the hotel corridor. That was the last I saw of him.

"All night I did not sleep. I tried to but could not. I could see him in the arms of Hortense—whichever way I looked in the dark, there he was still in Hortense's embrace.

Yet, strangely, I still no longer felt jealous. I felt only distressed, dreadfully repentant of

francs or two hundred francs would be all right but any odd change—four pounds and seven shillings for example—would be looked upon as disastrous a warning that something untoward must soon overtake the recipient. Messaline told me of these and a score more superstitions all equally childish and all confined apparently, to the inmates of such places. How and why the superstitions originated, she had no idea.

## CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH

"You yourself are not superstitious, I suppose?" I said to her when she had told me all this.

"Nobody can accuse me of being that," she laughed.

She paused.

"And yet," she said, "a curious thing happened some years ago in a house in England that I had bought the lease of. I got it cheap, because it was said to be haunted—it was a picturesque and delightful pre-Reformation manor on the outskirts of the town.

"I had only six or eight girls there, and whether or not they had heard the absurd tale about its being haunted, I don't know. Anyhow they, too, got into their heads the notion that the place was haunted, and there was one room that not one of them would go into at night.

"And then when one of the girls disappeared, absolutely vanished most mysteriously (for no one could by any possibility have got out of the house without my knowing it—I used to stay there a good deal myself), the conviction of the rest of them that there was something uncanny, supernatural about that

manor, increased And when, eight or ten months later, another girl disappeared in precisely the same way, I began to feel that I should have to end by leaving the place

"However, two years passed, and nothing more happened Then, just after Christmas, I and others were awakened in the middle of the night by a perfectly frightful scream I made sure that someone had been murdered, and I jumped out of bed and rushed along the passage and into one of the rooms, where I could hear loud moaning

"The room was in darkness—there was no electric light in the house—but I had a lighted candle, and there on the bed I saw a girl writhing about and completely beside herself—actually mad for the time I believe she was

"When after awhile I had managed to soothe her, and she began to recover, she told me, clutching me tightly all the while as I sat on the bed, that after being asleep for some time she had suddenly awakened, she didn't know why, and feeling nervous for some reason or other, had put out her hand to reach the box of matches on the table beside the bed

"And as she had done so *a cold, damp hand had closed over hers in the dark!*

"Of course it was all nonsense, and she must have been dreaming had a bad night mare most likely Once before the same girl had sworn to me that in the stillness of the night she had heard a faint sound like a lot of dry sticks rattling down on to the floor some-



where in the house—somewhere near her room, she thought. She had only just been able to hear the sound, she said, but was sure she had heard it.

“Well, after that the girls all became impossible to control. Some of them declared, even, that they would commit suicide if kept any longer in that house, so terrified were they

“So I decided to give it up. Before I had told them of my decision, however, the place caught fire—I am as certain as I am that I am sitting here that some of those wretches set it alight in order to be able to escape, because in less than a minute after the alarm had been given they were all out of their rooms, completely dressed

“And now comes the curious sequel. While we were all out in the grounds, watching the house burn—though built partly of stone, much of it was old timber, and the brigade had not arrived—a portion of one side of the house fell in with a crash. Just after it had done so a room which nobody had known existed became revealed between thick stone walls on the second floor. In it were what looked like a pile of sacks, not empty sacks, and some halberds—those we could see distinctly in the glare of the flames—and then a lot of things that looked like plate of some kind, church plate I should imagine. And after that came the most astonishing sight of all. As the sacks caught fire, some of them dropped down on

to the stone floor of the room, and we saw, quite clearly, several portions of human skeletons, and on the floor a lot of white bones. There were so many bones that they must have been those of three or four people at least, and then all at once one of the bits of skeleton on the sacks fell to pieces and the bones went rattling down on the stone floor. And do you know—that hidden room was actually on the other side of the partitioning stone wall of the room where that girl who had had such a fright slept—I had wondered sometimes why in a house built largely of timber that particular wall had been constructed of stone.

“What I have always supposed is that the hidden room must have been a priest’s hiding place in the days when the priests in this country were being pursued and persecuted and that it had a secret entrance which nobody knew of. Also that anybody accidentally coming upon the stone door and entering the room, suddenly found that the door he had entered by had closed behind him of its own accord so that unless able to discover the way to open it again he was entrapped. Indeed nobody could have heard any cries for help through those walls of solid stone. Can you think of a more plausible solution? But of course the talk of the house being haunted was, as I say, ridiculous.”

A point on which she was fond of dilating concerned the magnetism of some women the strange fact understood by nobody she said

that whereas many beautiful girls in all grades of the social scale make no sex appeal at all to men, any number of not merely plain, but ugly women and girls exercise the most extraordinary influence over men the moment the latter set eyes on them—and over some women too

Is it unconscious magnetism is it some inexplicable kind of personality, is it a natural affinity is it that certain women are born in sexual zones corresponding with those of certain men and other women, she would ask? Then she would expound one of her theories declare she believed that living human beings exhaled some sort of sexual atmosphere, or invisible sexual electric fluid which in some beings was many times stronger than in others To emphasize her contention she showed me women some of her own women who were quite ugly and I am bound to say that I had to agree with her For those women did possess an incomprehensible indefinable power of attraction which had nothing whatever to do with any sort of physical charm The very expression in their eyes was alluring When they smiled the allurements increased tenfold I contrasted them in imagination with many of the lovely women I had met, and as regarded sexual allurements these plain featured and often misshapen creatures had it all their own way

There are men of science who will tell you that every living human body is surrounded by an aura and that these auras are of varying

hues, and shades of hues They will go on to explain that, according to the hue or shade of the aura, the individual possesses this or that kind of temperament, and end by declaring that if only people would marry whose auras coincided, all marriages would prove to be harmonious for ever Messaline had never heard of auras, but her theory of electric fluid came near the theory of auras She said that among the ancient Greeks—and she was well versed in the history of ancient Greece—the belief had prevailed that in every human being there is a spirit, and that when two human beings fell hopelessly in love it meant that the spirit of each had passed into the other. What the actual cause of sex attraction is will no doubt one day be discovered and analyzed

“Money unlocks all doors and silences all tongues,” was a favourite aphorism of hers She said that though we in England talked so much about Continental vice, there was no form of Continental or other vice which was not discoverable in London or could not be indulged in in London, provided that the searcher was prepared to pay. I had imagined that I knew my way about London as well as most men of the world, but Messaline knew it better. There was apparently not a doubtful haunt of any description with which she was not acquainted, even if she had not herself actually visited them all I am not speaking now of the harmless night clubs of the Nineties—the Alsatians in Oxford Street, the

Thalia in Great Chapel Street, the Garden in Leicester Square, the Waterloo in Waterloo Place, the Spooferies in Maiden Lane, the Corinthian, where the Sports Club now stands, places in Baker Street and Osnaborough Street and Gower Street and a dozen more besides. All places of that sort she had been to—but there were others. And those others were far from being harmless. Some of the latter are in existence still, under different names and with new owners. One point which she emphasized was that whereas in those days most of the evil houses were situated in side streets and back streets of the West End, since the War the majority of the worst are in fashionable thoroughfares where rents are very high. Naturally the landlords or at any rate the superior landlords are blissfully ignorant of what is happening for outwardly the tenants are perfectly respectable people. Some years ago one of these nests of infamy was found existing undisturbed in one of the biggest mansions in Portland Place another in Mayfair another in Maddox Street another close to Belgrave Square another within a few doors of a police station! Messaline had an interest in one of them but as usual, she escaped detection.

When such places are raided there is generally a public outcry. How came they to be there? Why were they not suppressed before? Why were the police not informed about them or why had they not discovered

them? Yet nobody is really to blame. Any man with money enough can get the references he requires when he wants to rent a big house, as Messaline said. He then signs the lease, moves into the house, lives there quietly and respectably for awhile, then begins gradually to turn it into the den he all along meant to make it. The girls to reside there are brought in during the night, one or two at a time, during a period which may extend over weeks. Meanwhile he is all the time moving about amongst people of the class whom he intends eventually to entice to the house. He whispers a word here, a word there to men whom he knows he can trust not to spread the news amongst people of the wrong sort, or amongst people who might talk indiscreetly and so betray his secret. And being a shrewd judge of human nature, as all such men are, he rarely makes a mistake.

Some of the most extraordinary resorts for immorality, Messaline told me, are to be found in Chili and in Mexico. They are located in tunnels underground, as in Paris but in all respects they are worse than the Paris underground haunts. Some years ago they were described in a volume published in, I think, Berlin, with the result that author and publisher were fined and all copies of the book were destroyed. Such places are frequented more particularly by elderly voluptuaries willing to pay extravagant fees for this "privilege." And indeed they must, or it would not be

possible for the owners to go to the expense of making such dugouts. If the Governments are aware of the existence of these places, they remain supine and silent, while the authorities whose duty it is to expose haunts of vice neglect their duty, probably intentionally.

Other queer *bagnios* are the floating houses to be seen still on some of the great rivers of South America though less often now than formerly. Outwardly they resemble the ordinary floating theatres and could easily be mistaken for them. Inside they are furnished upholstered and fitted up exactly like any well appointed house of ill fame. They are owned for the most part by rich *soutencurs* and they travel hundreds of miles up the rivers stopping at every point within easy reach of a village. At one time the floating houses were eagerly sought by the coloured population who considered them fair prey. Consequently the men in charge of them went armed and many a battle was waged between coloured men and white for the possession of a floating house complete with all its occupants. Realising the value that white women possessed in the eyes of these races and knowing how battles had been fought to obtain such women certain super-soundrels collected together white women on their own account conveyed them in boats up the great rivers too and deliberately sold them to men of colour. When this was discovered by the *londrê* brothel owners they began to wage war on these pirates as

well, and in some instances were attacked by the pirates and the coloured population simultaneously. And this is not ancient history. It all happened long after the emancipation of the slaves in the Southern States, where the same kind of traffic and warfare went on as in South America, when slavery had for years been abolished.

Trade in human souls and bodies I have called it. When did the trade begin and when will it end? Or will it ever end? There is no part of the world where it does not flourish to-day, though in the "civilized" countries, as I have said before, it flourishes more or less unknown to a great body of the population. In the Yoshiwara of Tokio women are still confined in barred cages like those of animals in a Zoological Gardens and the crowds passing along the streets examine them critically as they might examine prize winning beasts. make their selections, the selected victims being then summoned out of their cages and taken away for an hour or so, after which they are once more returned to their cages to attract fresh 'customers'. The Japanese *souteneurs* call this proceeding 'making love'!

I have zig zagged round the world three times and had seen much that Messaline told me about before she spoke about it at all which was one reason why I believed stories of hers that might otherwise have seemed incredible. She did not, however, speak about one form of



sexual impulse that is common in China, the sexual passion which is aroused in some Chinese by the infliction of pain, even by the spectacle of pain being inflicted. It is a form of lust almost peculiar to the Chinese as a nation, though Messaline had told me that sadists in plenty are to be found in civilized Europe. That, indeed, is probably the reason the Chinese are by nature so cruel. It is said by Europeans who have lived many years in China, and have closely studied the ways and customs of its people, that the Chinese do not feel physical pain as acutely as we do. That may or may not be true, but their power of imagination is extraordinarily vivid. I never actually witnessed any Chinese torture, but some of the tortures they practise were described to me in detail by Chinamen in China, and are too horrible to describe in print. The late Sir Robert Hart, whom I came to know intimately whilst in Pekin, and who then had lived over twenty years in the country, declared to me that Chinamen of the lower grade found it difficult to excite sexual passion at all without the accompaniment of some sort of intense pain in the victim.

"They have always been like that," I remember his saying, "and they always will be. It is their nature—in their blood. Missionaries and others do their best to train their proselytes to overcome the desire, stamp it out, but they succeed only in enabling some of them to curb it. I myself have seen dreadful things

done to men, and to women, too, which I tried to put a stop to, but without success. The women are not like that. I consider that the women of China are far more cultured intellectually than the men—I don't mean better educated, they are not. But the women's feelings, their sense of humanity, is more highly developed than that of the bulk of the male population, and I have travelled up and down China for years and had exceptional opportunities of seeing for myself and forming my own judgment."

A curious thing she told me was that the dread disease does not date back through many centuries. About four centuries ago it was unknown, like cancer and consumption, which most doctors who have studied the history of those afflictions declare to have had their origin in comparatively recent generations. Syphilis itself in the days of superstition, religious and otherwise, was looked upon as a curse directly inflicted by the Almighty as a punishment for sin, a superstition wisely encouraged, because it served a good purpose. "If to day we could cure all patients suffering from syphilis," Alexander Weill wrote in a book entitled "The Laws and Mysteries of Love," which Messaline possessed in its first edition, "to-morrow the same disease would return in a new form, for it would be re-created by the same irregularities that first led to its production . . . Every new infringement of natural laws would again bring into being new incurable diseases which can be avoided only by those who have firmly resolved to observe these laws strictly . . . Any kind of libertinism in sexual intercourse suffices by itself to give rise to disease" From which, if his surmise be correct, a disease, or diseases as terrible as the scourge of syphilis, but of which we know nothing, must have been prevalent the world over from time immemorial—"infringement of natural laws" and "libertinism in sexual intercourse" having obtained probably almost since the beginning of time.

And while on this unpleasant subject, which I had no intention of broaching when I began this book (though Messaline often spoke about it), a few more words may not come amiss, in view of the fact that the more young people are aware of the ghastly effects of syphilis the more careful they will be to avoid contracting it.

It may be taken as an axiom that if all prostitutes were healthy, venereal diseases would disappear—not that immunity from the diseases would justify indulgence in promiscuous association with women. This axiom does not fit Alexander Weill's theory just quoted, but doctors are inclined to agree with it. There are still many well-meaning but illogical folk who urge that knowledge of how to guard against the disease ought not to be imparted, for that such knowledge is an incentive to immorality, those possessing it believing that they can indulge in sexual immorality yet be free from all risk of infection. Such people forget that ignorance of what to do may prove extraordinarily far reaching and affect many succeeding generations. For, human nature being what it is, even persons habitually moral and leading clean lives may on occasion lapse, and if, having lapsed, they are ignorant of what steps to take when suddenly they become aware that something is amiss with them, results most disastrous may follow, with overwhelming misery for their unborn children and their children's children.

The extent to which our fighting forces were depleted during the war, owing to the spread of this scourge, is well known, the evil being enormously aggravated owing to the pig headedness of the authorities—or some of them—in refusing to instruct our men in the precautions they ought to take. This striking lack of foresight, or want of common sense, was brought forcibly home to me in France. In charge, for some months, of a rest camp at a base, through which units were constantly passing it was my duty to report the number of men in each unit who were found to be suffering from the disease. Always the proportion of unfit was high, but one day a Canadian unit came along which was one hundred per cent fit. On inquiry I discovered that the Commanding Officer of that unit had paraded his men prior to their embarkation and himself carefully explained to them the steps they would be well advised to take to prevent all possibility of infection. And one and all had acted on his advice.

Another reason advanced for not allowing advice to be given on this most important subject is that “to encourage the acquisition of such knowledge would open the door to quackery, and the alleged cures or preventatives might prove more harmful than the disease.”

They *might*, of course. Very likely they would if the individual went for advice to any but a qualified physician. But the argument

applies equally to any ailment treated by a quack. The reply argument is that plenty of men suffering from, or believing themselves to have contracted the disease, are afraid or ashamed to reveal the fact to a doctor. Personally, I don't believe it, unless the potential patient is a fool. For assuredly nobody can suppose that a doctor is going to reveal anything that he may discover in a professional capacity, or anything that his patients may tell him in confidence.

Messaline had already described to me the signs and symptoms of the disease, saying that everybody ought to be familiar with them. Later she brought me into the presence of men and women already afflicted with it in different stages. What I learned from her proved most useful afterwards in connection with a branch of my army work indirectly connected with the work of the R A M C. Indeed it was surprising to find that many of the young students who soon after the outbreak of war had joined that excellent corps were themselves wholly ignorant of the external signs, some of them did not know even all the symptoms!

After the revolution in Russia, when daughters and other relatives of the highest in that unfortunate land flocked into Constantinople and Bucharest and Sofia and similar cities, literally starving and only too ready to jump at any sort of employment that would enable them to live, the foul vultures of the Traffic saw their chance, swooped down in

their scores, secured for their own vile ends many of Russia's loveliest girls belonging to the aristocracy and the nobility. Messaline went there too. How could it have been otherwise? Was she not a master mind in the "profession"?

She told me about that piratical expedition—it was nothing less. She showed me photographs of some of the victims. How they were draped, or undraped, I need not describe. There was something revolting in the thought that well bred women, many with long lines of distinguished forebears, who had been reared in luxury or at any rate in comfort, should through sheer misery and starvation have been literally forced into the life of shame. Some had tried to be waitresses, domestic servants, messengers, but how can any woman brought up in idleness and with no knowledge of any form of remunerative employment fill any post of any sort capably? One after another they had been dismissed, even thrown out with insult and abuse, so when suddenly they had offers of food and shelter from the agents of the Traffic, they were driven to accept the terms.

And the stories of their experiences! They seemed hardly credible in an age when Europe is supposed to be civilized. Many had been outraged. Others had been flogged. Some had been tortured. All had been subjected to the grossest indignities by the scum of St. Petersburg and of Moscow. Everything they

had owned in the world had been forcibly taken from them. One woman, little more than a girl, cousin of a Grand Duke who had been shot dead before her eyes, had actually outwitted her persecutors up to a point. On their breaking into her house while she was in bed she had, while they were trying to force open the door of her room, pulled out of her nightdress the ribbon which encircled the neck of it and threaded in its place her row of valuable pearls. The rabble had ransacked her room, stolen everything, stripped her naked, but the idea had not occurred to them to examine her nightdress, so that she had escaped with the pearls. Eventually, in Constantinople, she had been compelled to sell them to avoid starvation.

The demand for such women was prodigious; it exceeded the supply. Consequently the vultures of the Traffic charged extortionate prices, knowing that they would readily be paid by the rich voluptuaries amongst their *clientèle*. Some of these Russian girls were brought to England. Others were sent to India and Egypt and South America. In Cairo, by an amazing coincidence, a rich young man from Moscow, who had been living in Egypt for several years, was told of an exceptionally lovely Russian girl just imported, and informed that on payment of a certain sum she would be brought to him. When she was brought in he found himself face to face with his own niece! He at once paid a large sum for her liberation, bought a house for her, and



virtually adopted her without asking anything in return.

Messaline thought that quixotic. With her debased opinion of mankind she could not, she said, comprehend how anybody could be *si bête*. The word chivalry did not occur in her dictionary. The uncle had paid for the girl, surely he had the right to do what he pleased with her, and, though his blood relation, she would have had no right whatever to resist him or to complain. That was Messaline's idea of equity, the outcome of her life and associations and surroundings.

It is generally admitted that when a man of good family and education and high intelligence comes down in the world and becomes a crook, he usually becomes a super-crook. So, probably, it is with women. In the 'Nineties there were several "Honbles." among the women of the town (London), and always they were worse in every way than their more humble (by birth) sisters. Thus some of the Russian ladies of breeding who through the curse of the revolution had come on evil days, actually joined the ranks of the *madames* and in that rôle succeeded amazingly. Gifted with a charm of manner and knowing how to talk in order to gain the confidence of girls of their own social standing, they had little difficulty in luring victims and literally selling them to men who sought such girls. One Russian woman of this description had the effrontery to bring half-a-dozen girls, who before the

revolution had been friends of her own family, over to England and set them up in a house of accommodation in the neighbourhood of Baker Street. Among the patrons of this house were two brothers, sons of an English country gentleman living in the midlands. Happening to know the Russian language, they discovered from one of the girls exactly what had happened, and how their compatriot had deceived the six of them. Thereupon the brothers, whose father was a man of importance and influence, set to work to right the wrong that had been done, and eventually the six were released, supplied with funds, and eventually restored to their relations, then settled in Belgium.

"Have you ever met ——?" Messaline said to me one day, naming a woman then well known in London and Paris Society.

I told her that I had.

"And you know much about her?" she went on, with a queer look.

I said I knew all about her.

"Ah," she laughed.

The woman referred to was at that time secretly notorious, if such a phrase can be used. She owned a big flat in the neighbourhood of Mayfair, to which only a particular section of Society was invited. Outwardly her well-arranged receptions were like many similar entertainments, but inwardly they were wholly different. None of the guests had any morals to speak of, and all knew why they

were invited. It was not out of mere hospitality. Probably it was not out of hospitality at all, but solely for commercial gain.

For any guest, of either sex, asking to be introduced to any other guest, meant that the hostess would eventually receive, from one party, if not from both, a substantial cheque in return for the introduction. The fact of being introduced, or being willing to be introduced, to this or that guest, implied that both guests were "willing." Yet the greatest decorum was observed at these receptions, there was nothing common, nothing vulgar about them, you never heard a coarse word or even a doubtful jest, never saw a meaning glance exchanged. No stranger could ever have imagined, had he not been told, that introductions were effected there for the sole purpose of immoral relationships later.

The hostess was a woman of good birth—she is dead now—and received everywhere. True, people outside the magic circle sometimes wondered how she came to be so well off for when her husband had died he had not left a large fortune. But they never bothered their heads much about it. Perhaps some rich friend "looked after her," for she was known not to be particular in regard to her acquaintanceships. If so that was nobody's concern but her own. She had money, plenty of it, and she spent it lavishly. That was the main thing. It always is.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH

SOMETIMES Messaline would talk of the days when Tasker and I had come upon her in different parts of the world. She had liked Tasker; possibly she had liked his fortune better, though none of it had ever come her way, for he detested her. On one occasion she recalled a gruesome incident in Paris.

Tasker had lived for sensation and excitement, and, on hearing that an anarchist named Emile Henri was to be guillotined, had insisted that he and I must attend the execution, as he said he had never seen one and that the spectacle would therefore be a novelty in the way of sensation.

Messaline was with us—we were having an *apéritif* in the Hôtel Continental—and at once declared that she wanted to see it too. She would come with us.

"You'll do nothing of the sort," Tasker replied.

But when Messaline decided to do a thing she almost invariably did it, and this proved to be no exception.

How to get permission to be present at the execution was the first problem. Tasker set to work to find out.

"Oh, but *assurément*," he was told, "for a

*monsieur* of *monsieur's* high rank [the high rank" of being in receipt of nearly £1000 a week] it can easily be arranged. The ordinary, the common public, *ah, n'ais non far exemple!*

Then Madame chipped in. We must do the thing properly, thoroughly. We must first of all visit the condemned man in his cell. That proposal, however, was instantly vetoed by the individual we were consulting. *Ces messieurs*—yes, they might visit him. But a woman—*ah non*, that could not be. Even Messaline with her wonderful gift of argument and power of persuasion and her willingness to pay handsomely for the "privilege" failed to get round him. She believed, as I have said already, that money could accomplish anything. It was not able to accomplish that.

The streaks of dawn were piercing the dark and heavy clouds as Tasker's electrically lit brougham sped along the slippery cobblestoned streets—this was before the days of cars. I had many times mixed in cosmopolitan and strange crowds but never before had I found myself surrounded by such an oddly assorted mob as had assembled that morning in Place la Roquette. Outlined a hundred yards from the five foot barricade of stout timber erected to keep spectators at a distance the scaffold with its tall guillotine could be distinctly seen rising out of the grey mist. The *caillle* of the capital was there in its thous

ands reminiscent of the Reign of Terror scenes that one had read about. There were, too, types of humanity so remarkable that I have never quite forgotten them.

Some were villainous looking enough. Women were there in plenty—English, Belgian, French of course, Portuguese, German, women of many other nations, some apparently well to do *bourgeoise*, some sensation seekers purely and lovers of the sinister and the morbid while many, half hidden in wraps and furs, with the morning light revealing what the artificial lights of night had hidden, bore the impress of their calling stamped on their every feature.

The brougham had gone back to the hotel but Messaline was with us still. For awhile we continued to mix with the unsavoury throng refreshing itself with absinthe in a cabaret near by. Presently our pilot, a plain clothes police representative, came along and asked if the *deux messieurs* would not be 'so good as to come with him—but not Madame.' So Madame found another escort and said she would watch from the barrier.

When we entered the cell with Monsieur Brun, who then was Governor of the jail, one or two journalists and a couple of officials, the prisoner was still asleep, curled up on his *paillasse*. The Governor shook the *paillasse* gently and the man gradually awoke. Then he sat up.

"Emile Henri," Monsieur Brun said in

rather a faltering voice, "your hour has come—be brave"

Without speaking, the man looked round at us all—I can see his scared expression still. Then he got up and began to dress. He was offered some rum, which he refused. Then someone offered him a cigarette, but he pushed it away. Asked if he would like to see the Chaplain, he shook his head and frowned

As the prison clock struck four, the great gates opening on to the barricaded square swung back, and eight of us, including Diebler, the executioner, passed solemnly under the broad stone arch on our way to the scaffold, round which a dozen or so journalists were already assembled

It was then daylight, and the serried mass of white faces topping the stout timber barricade was in marked contrast to the sombre surroundings and the grey background

The final preparations were completed in a few moments.

Then Diebler turned to the Governor :

"All is ready," he said.

With a swift motion of the hand, Monsieur Brun signalled to Henri to advance. As he did so some half hearted cheering as well as booing arose from the distant crowd. It struck me that at that supreme moment the Governor looked even more ghastly than the criminal. At the plank ready to receive him the condemned man stopped abruptly

"*Courage, camarades!*" he tried to call out,

ing out of some open windows on to the morning air, and a moment afterwards we passed a still brilliantly illuminated mansion where the forms of couples dancing could be seen silhouetted on the blinds.

"Lady Blank's carriage!" an English lackey, resplendent in powdered head, and plush, and silken hose, bellowed down the line of carriages, as our humble vehicle rattled past. "Lady Blank's carriage!"

"Whose house is that?" Tasker inquired of our driver.

"Monsieur le Baron d'A——l's," came the reply. "You see that fellow, Monsieur?" indicating the lackey. He jerked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction from which we had come. "He was like that some years ago," he added with a shrug.

"You mean Emile Henri was a footman?" Tasker asked in French.

The driver nodded. Then, showing his profile, he raised his elbow to indicate the act of drinking.

"They dismissed him for that, *pauvre bête*," he said.

"And he became an anarchist?"

"He was half an anarchist before. He always was mad."

In Rue Ste Anne some women with tousled yellow hair were peeping out between their blinds. Our driver noticed them and again became communicative.

"He took to that afterwards," he said, jerk-



ing his thumb as he had done before, in the direction of the windows

"Look to what?"

"*Maisonnettes d'amour*," he replied

I glanced at Messaline who had now more or less recovered. She was scowling up at the driver malevolently

Noticing her expression, he screwed himself round on his box seat and began to lash his horse. That infuriated her—she was fond of and kind to all animals—and jumping up she hit him a blow on the head with her umbrella, breaking the umbrella in two. He burst out laughing and let off a volley of French oaths

"Quite a moral story," Tacker said as he lit a cigarette and drew the collar of his overcoat more closely round his throat. "First a good billet and a good wage then drink, then infamy, then crime, and last of all—the guillotine."

Messaline who was exceptionally highly strung did not for many days entirely get over the shock the spectacle of that execution had given her. What would have happened had she been within a few feet of the guillotine, as we had been, is impossible to say. I have been told by an eminent physician that women of that temperament have on more than one occasion been rendered insane through witnessing some terrible scene

She was at that time in her early youth as we all were, and had been engaged in her dreadful occupation only a few years. We

did not then know that she was engaged in it, or in any form of business, and were puzzled to know exactly what she did with her time, for that she was no ordinary, time-wasting and leisure seeking woman was obvious to both of us. So one day I ventured to ask her if she had any occupation in life. Her expression as she replied I shall never forget. It combined amusement, compassion, contempt, but most of all her look was evil. She had never looked quite like that before.

"What is my occupation?" she laughed. "In what way do I get all the money you see me spending, you mean? But what should I have to earn money for when I have already plenty, as you must see?"

"Because you don't look like the stupid women who never use their brains," Tasker cut in quickly. "And as you use your brains you probably have some sort of private interest or hobby, and that most likely means that you are earning money—a lot of money I should imagine, though I can't imagine how."

She watched him narrowly for several moments, her eyes half closed.

"Joseph, you are a very intelligent young man," she answered at last. "You have what I call the instinct, the vision. And you are right. I do earn money, much money. But I like you. I like you both so you shall never discover how I make it—never. You understand? So never ask me again."

She had spoken very seriously. If ever she

felt a twinge of remorse for the career she was pursuing I believe she felt it at that moment Of course we never did ask her again, or broach the subject in any way It was not until the following year that, by accident, we discovered the truth

We discovered it partly on account of the dreadful looking men who used to call to see her I have never seen men quite like them, and I cannot describe them It is said that you can tell a man's calling or profession by his face, and since I have seen male procurers I know that such men, at any rate can be identified by their faces, their loose, unpleasant lips, their peculiar eyes their shifty glance the brutal hard look that comes over them from time to time while they talk And so in an hotel in Sacramento one day I inquired of the bell boy who brought ice water to my room, and whom I had tipped generously more than once who those men were who had called in the afternoon and asked to see—I mentioned the name by which we then knew Messaline

He "sure didn't know" of course But the way he said it convinced me that he did know So I locked the door gave him five dollars and told him he would not be let out until he had told me what he knew about those men

At first he tried bluff but gave it up when promised another five dollars if he would tell the truth and promised that nothing he might say would be repeated to anybody

"They are men who get women for the

joints," he said bluntly, "and that woman helps them. They all work together."

This came as a shock. I had suspected Messaline of being engaged in some sort of illegal, possibly even criminal, traffic, the traffic in forbidden drugs, for instance, but *that*

The lad gave me particulars. He told me of various places in the city where these people met. He knew a lot about Messaline, and told it all to me. As I have said, I was young then, and it gave me a nasty jar to think I had been associating on terms of intimacy—it was practically friendship—with such a creature. Yet she could not then have been more than four and twenty. Since those days I, like many others, have become inured to associating with men and women of all sorts, and most of us, I think, find such association instructive.

And here I will digress for a few moments, to touch upon a matter which will be of interest to some. At the Jesuit school where I was educated the boys were intentionally kept in complete ignorance of much on which I have long since realized we ought on the contrary, to have been enlightened. If we ever spoke of women—I don't mean what are called "bad women" but any woman at all excepting our own close relatives—and a prefect overheard us, we were peremptorily told to change the subject. Any reference to anything feminine was disapproved of, any joke or jest or anecdote bearing in any way or even indirectly upon the opposite sex would evoke a frown.

In my class was a jolly little round-faced boy who could at that time speak only a few words of English, and, as I happened to be able to talk French fluently, we were together a good deal. We called him "Jimmy," because his name was Jaime—he was the son of Don Carlos. Jimmy possessed, even at that age, thirteen or fourteen, a keen sense of humour, and had some funny stories—at least we thought them funny then—in which the female element figured rather conspicuously.

Overheard one day loosing off some of these *piquant* narratives, he was taken to the prefect's room and soundly flogged, which in his case was a far more serious affair than it would have been in ours, because, being Don Carlos's son, his peccadilloes were usually overlooked. After that the whole school was summoned into the big study, and for quite a long time we were lectured on the iniquity of such talk, and incidentally warned against the whole of the female tribe as though they were a race of lepers!

Of course it was all done with the best intention in the world, but it was quite wrong. This warning, and the general atmosphere of mystery which seemed to surround women, stirred our curiosity, made us keener than ever to find out what all the secrecy meant. And, as a natural result, many boys on leaving that school knowing nothing of certain subjects on which they ought to have been enlightened, proceeded to make discoveries for themselves

in the worst possible way. For most of them went direct from school to one or other of the army crammers of that period, where the atmosphere was the exact opposite of the atmosphere they had been brought up in.

I am assured that all that has been changed, and that to-day intelligent instruction is given in those schools, so that when the boys leave they are fully alive to all the pitfalls which await them if they knock about the world. Also I am told that women and girls may be and are talked about quite openly and without incurring the displeasure of the priests in charge. So presumably all is now well.

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY FIRST

MESSALINE, as was perhaps natural, detested the priesthood of every creed, but in particular the Jesuits. Why the Jesuits should have been so especially obnoxious to her I had not been able to discover. The adjectives she would apply to them if the word were ever mentioned were awful, and, annoyed at the violence of her invectives, I one day rounded on her

"What have the Jesuits ever done to you that you should hate them so frightfully?" I asked. I hoped, too, that in the heat of her fury she might reveal her secret. But she was too wary to do that.

"It is not what they have done," she retorted, "it is what they wanted and tried to do that time in Buenos Aires, when that young man was found dead in that house I told you about."

She got up out of her chair and came close up to me. Her eyes had again the half mad expression I had seen in them once before.

"If the Jesuits had succeeded in doing what they wanted and tried to do, to day I should be in my grave!" she literally hissed.

The thought flashed in upon me—"That

might be a good thing for everybody," but I did not say it. And I did not succeed in getting her to say what those dreadful Jesuits really had done. She probably deserved it, any way.

She had told me about the district in San Francisco known as the Tenderloin and once when in that city with Tasker I suggested to him that we might visit it. He always liked seeing places of that sort in different parts of the world.

It is a quarter where a number of short, straight streets run parallel. The houses in *those streets are all small, and much alike*. Only after dark does the Tenderloin become busy. Then every house is lit inside, and in each, behind Venetian shutters—there are no blinds—sits a woman. In some of the houses two women sit together.

They are all more or less good to look upon. All types are there—dark, fair, brunette, slim, buxom, tall, short. Every nation is represented, apparently. There are women of all colours. And each street has its fixed tariff. In the first we entered that night the tariff was a dollar—the lowest rate of any. We chatted with the dollar women, sad-eyed, most of them pathetically anxious we should know that their tariff had not always been a dollar. Oh, no, indeed not. One woman told us her price had once been twenty dollars. She was so proud of that! For years she assured us no man would have dared to come near her with less



than twenty dollars in his pocket. With self-satisfaction another described the comfort she had lived in for several years in the fifteen dollars street

"And how are things now with you?" we asked her.

She gave a bitter little laugh, and explained

"Take this," Tasker said as we got up to go, and he pushed some bills into her hand "But mind—nothing must be said to anybody"

She could not believe her eyes at first. Then she actually began to cry. Snatching his hand, she kissed it

"That is *the very first time in my life* any man has—"

She did not finish. Even her degradation had not wholly killed in her the sense of gratitude

We went into other streets after that. In each the tariff was higher than in the last. And as the tariffs rose, so did the charms of the tenants of the lit up little houses become more alluring, their surroundings richer and more garish. And such is human nature, in each street the inmates of the houses spoke contemptuously of their sisters in the cheaper streets. It did not occur to them, apparently, that one day they, too, would most likely be occupying the cheaper houses, possibly even the dollar houses

If Messaline spoke the truth, many more

girls disappear every year than the public ever hears about or even suspects. This applies to all European countries. The daughter of a well-known man vanishes, and there is a hue and cry, of course. Immense publicity was given to the disappearance in England of a writer of popular novels last year, who eventually was discovered. But the majority of the girls who go out for a walk one day and are never heard of again belong to a class in which the public is usually not interested, so nobody troubles much about them.

Even in carefully safeguarded England the number of girls spirited away is not small, for, in spite of all the precautions taken, the traffickers manage to carry on their trade here at a profit. Time and again an attractive-looking maidservant arriving alone from the country at any big railway terminus in any big city will find herself being asked by some benevolent-looking elderly female if she has missed her friends or if there is anything she can do for her. And if the girl is so unsophisticated as to welcome the stranger's offer of assistance she runs a grave risk of getting into serious trouble. The same remark applies to a girl travelling in a railway carriage with only one other occupant if that occupant, male or female, gets into conversation with her and becomes unduly friendly. There are even ghouls who keep a sharp look-out at railway stations for girls who are travelling alone, but fortunately most modern girls of education

have intelligence enough to be able to look after themselves. These statements may evoke the remark, "We have heard all that before." But often what has been "heard before" is forgotten or not heeded. Witness the repeated success of the confidence trick, which assuredly everybody has heard about and so might be expected to be proof against.

A *ruse* that has lately been adopted in the West End of London, I am told with considerable success, consists in dropping a glove on the pavement in a street like Grafton Street or Dover Street, rather late at night, the owner of the glove then seating herself in a stationary taxi beside the kerb, with the door open. Any man coming along sees the glove, naturally supposes that the lady in the taxi has dropped it accidentally, so picks it up and hands it to her. While he is handing it she peers at him, decides if he looks "likely"—i.e., a man likely to pay her what she wants—and, if he does, suggests with an alluring smile, after thanking him, that he should get in.

The telephone call *ruse*, too, some of these women are finding effective. Miss A has heard that Mr B is well off and that he has a *penchant* for ladies of rather easy virtue. One day when he answers his telephone a charming voice inquires—"Is that you, darling?" Naturally he is intrigued, and replies that he does not know which darling she means or whether *he* is speaking to the right "darling," or something facetious of that sort. He hears

her laugh then she says something that amuses him and soon they are having quite a friendly little chat. Before they ring off it has been arranged that they shall meet—and with that she has him hooked. We men are very soft things in a case of that sort.

Messaline had not mentioned Isodore's name since she had told me about him when relating the story of the beginning of her career at the castle in the forest and about two years ago I questioned her concerning him thinking that probably he had died. She did not answer at once.

"He has gone out of my life," she said at last sadly. "He was like the rest of you men—a clever liar. I don't blame him for having left me. I blame only myself for having been fool enough to believe his plausible lies. He tired of me of course. Are there any men in the world who don't tire of one woman married or unmarried? He was really fond of me once—devoted to me—actually loved me I believe."

Again she was silent for awhile.

"I'll tell you the story," she went on suddenly. "We were partners in this Traffic, as you know—partners too in the other way. About eighteen months after the death of Countess A a very beautiful girl came to us. She arrived at the castle one night with others. I went with Isodore to see what they looked like as we usually did and I noticed the first glance he gave her. It was not his ordinary,

indifferent, cold look of inspection and curiosity. It was quite a different look, and on the instant I knew how he felt about her. Next day he told me—made some pretext or other—that he must see her alone. He saw her alone that day, and the next, and for many days afterwards. He saw her at night, too. And during those days I could actually *feel* his fondness for me dying, dying quickly. He grew more and more infatuated with the girl, and when he told me that he meant to conduct her personally to some man or other who, he said, would most likely pay a large sum for her, I knew it was all over that he had no purchaser in view, that he himself was going to live with her, had transferred his affection from me to her. I ought to have told him I knew, but I didn't. I ought to have been mad with jealousy, but I wasn't. Why I wasn't I can't imagine. I think I must have been too utterly disillusioned and miserable to care one way or the other. And from that day I have hated your sex with an even greater hatred."

"And when did you see him again?" I asked.

"I never saw him again. I have not seen him from that day to this, and I never shall. He may be dead. I have no idea."

"Have you dissolved the partnership?"

"It was only a verbal contract of course. You can't put things like that in writing. Yes, we dissolved it. He wrote me one letter and

I answered it That was all I remained in possession of the castle until the war broke out "

Isodore all those years ago, and then the young man in Buenos Aires I wondered if those had really been the only two men who in the whole of her life had touched her heart Her passion had spent itself on others, I knew but passion and love are so wide apart though so often confounded The more I came to know her character, the more complex it seemed Mental specialists tell me they have women not unlike her among their patients—sex mad women who in several other respects too, are abnormal, yet have wonderful intelligence and a quite uncanny knowledge of the inmost thoughts of those of their fellow creatures with whom they come in contact Such women too like Messaline, cannot distinguish between right and wrong, are wholly devoid of what is called conscience

I hardly like to broach the subject of a certain operation on which Messaline had much to say At rare intervals women die when undergoing it and then the cases are reported in the newspapers and the ill starred doctor, if proved guilty is sent to jail But operations of that nature she said are being secretly performed almost daily in every country in Europe chiefly among the rich as the poor cannot afford to pay the fees demanded by the operators who know the risk they run of the truth leaking out The heaviest penalties are

inflicted here in England. In some of the Continental countries a fine meets the case, and a qualified practitioner is not necessarily struck off the medical registers. She, of course was of opinion that no penalty of any kind ought to be imposed. Again she attacked what she called 'the conventions'

"You hypocritical people," she said, "not content with hounding out of your 'respectable' family circles any poor wretch of a girl who is so unfortunate as to allow herself to become *enceinte*, must need bring the law crashing down upon the man or woman to whom she turns in her mental agony to save herself from life long shame. With all your boasted love of your fellow creatures you have no consideration no charity no compassion. Those among you who manage to avoid the pitfalls (often you only just avoid them and through no effort of your own but because you accidentally walk to right or left of them) delight in vilifying any woman who is less fortunate and in tearing her character to shreds. It disgusts me. It ought to disgust any man or woman who professes to be a just and right thinking person—not that I pretend to be either in most other respects. I am convinced that in generations to come all your rules of good conduct as you call them will be overthrown and honest thinking will take their place.

It used to be said that the late Sir George Lewis knew more of the skeletons in the cup-

boards of the Great in this country (and by the Great I mean all the rich community, for to-day Money is Greatness) than anybody else living Messaline knew as much and probably more about the skeletons of the Great the world over. What a book she could have written! But who would have dared to publish it? We were talking one day of the people who voluntarily disappear, in the sense that they leave home without leaving any address and after having given instructions that no questions as to their possible whereabouts are to be answered.

One man whose name is a household word to-day (I dare not even hint at his profession, for the arm of the law of libel is long) disappears periodically for a month or two months at a time. Not even his most intimate friends know where he goes or what becomes of him. They believe that he goes abroad on some mission or other connected with his work.

"What a man!" Messaline said. "At home—so demure, so quiet, so deeply respected, *tout ce qu'il y a de plus respectable!* Yet when he comes to me—*ah, mon Dieu!* He is a beast, an animal. He is like a mad creature. He wants everything—everything. And I find it for him because he pays me all I ask. But it is horrible. He should be in a mad asylum during those weeks, not at large at all. Then suddenly he recovers his senses. He becomes calm and grave again. It is like



a great fire that has burnt itself out. He returns home looking perhaps a little peculiar about the eyes but otherwise as he always looked. Nobody at his home or among his friends knows. Nobody suspects. What a strange thing this human nature is!"

## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND

SHE told me of others, who act in the same way; of others who act differently when these attacks of insanity—for it must be a form of temporary insanity—take hold of them. Another case she mentioned was of an elderly man who lives in a country town in *England*. He worked hard until the age of fifty. He is a devout churchman, apparently, does much good in his town, is actively interested in philanthropic schemes, and temperate in all his habits. Soon after he had retired from business he took to going to London about twice a year and remaining there about three weeks, and this he does still. On his arrival he engages a room in a small hotel in the West Central area, at which hotel he is now well known, though known there under an assumed name. He deposits with the manager a fixed sum of money that he has brought with him, and the manager knows that when that money has been exhausted in payment of his strange visitor's board and lodging it will be time for him to notify the visitor, who will then go home to the country again.

While he is resident in the hotel, however, the visitor remains in bed in a condition of hopeless intoxication. He changes his drink

from time to time—for some days it will be whisky, then for some days port, or marsala, then champagne, sometimes even beer. He never becomes ill. He is never attacked with delirium tremens. He lies there like a log, completely inert, sodden with drink. On the day before the date when his money will all have been expended the hotel manager stops supplying him with drink, and by the following morning the man is sober again and apparently quite well.

There are professional money lenders who add a sort of side line to their legitimate business by virtually selling the honour of some of their clients to the highest bidder. Messaline told me of several, whose methods of procedure are identical.

A well to-do woman borrows from one of them in the ordinary way. She renews the bill, and in due course renews it again, or borrows a further sum on flimsy security. Meanwhile the lender has discovered that she is daily and nightly playing cards for high stakes which she cannot afford, or gambling heavily. Also that among her friends are several men of the usual type who are greatly attracted by her. Finally unable to repay the loans, she comes to the money lender to ask what can be done to plead with him, to all intents she throws herself on his mercy.

Then it is that the man begins to operate. He talks to her quite nicely, explaining how ever, that he cannot under any circumstances

allow the loans to stand over longer, then goes on to outline gradually the only opening left to her to wipe out her debt completely. There are several men friends of hers who like her very much; they are rich, they could easily get her out of her difficulty, he practically tells her in so many words. He happens to be personally acquainted with these friends of hers, he says, and might, if she will agree to the proposal, approach one or other of them and delicately suggest that he should repay the loans and the interest on her behalf, provided she will undertake to allow him certain liberties.

Generally the woman expresses the greatest indignation—at first. Sometimes she even flies into a passion and makes a scene. But the man is too astute not to know that the outburst will soon pass; indeed the fiercer the outburst the sooner it passes, as a rule. If she does not in the end agree to his proposal then and there, then some days later she will come to him and tell him that, after carefully thinking over his abominable suggestion, she has decided . . . , because there is no other way out of her entanglement so far as she can see . . . it is Hobson's choice . . . and so on

That being finally arranged, the money-lender gets into communication with several of the men whom he knows are ready to pay heavily for the favour he is going to offer them, and, after negotiations, the woman is passed to the one offering the best price over and

above the amount of the loans and their accrued interest. It is merely another form of blackmail, of course, but the money-lenders who adopt it call it a "sound business proposition"

What struck me as so remarkable about Messaline was that nothing whatever in her face, expression, voice or outward bearing in the least betrayed her calling. From first to last I have met various women who are engaged in the Traffic, and all, without exception, bear the impress of their infamous profession written all over them. To see Messaline being driven in her big limousine through the streets of the town in the South of France where of late years she mostly resided, you would have supposed her to be one of the many opulent women of leisure who inhabit the luxurious villas on the surrounding hills. Her features were no more coarse than her language; she was astonishingly well preserved and not unduly "made up", her voice was soft and pleasant, her bearing erect; she remained comparatively slim, and though dressed generally in the height of fashion she never over-dressed. All of which tends to enhance what I have always maintained, that in every respect she was abnormal. Further proof of this is that quite a lot of members of her own sex, some of whom knew a good deal about her though themselves in every way respectable, really liked her, they would not on any account have spoken to or even knowingly glanced at any

girls or women of the class to which her victims belonged. That, no doubt, was due to her strange and inexplicable personality, of which I have already spoken. I have seen her in conversation with members of the French Chamber of Deputies, with Ambassadors, with wives of diplomats—I once saw her talking animatedly to a Spanish bishop! Let me say at once that none of these people had the remotest idea who she was, beyond knowing her name, the name she adopted in private life, or rather in her public life. And when one remembered what she secretly thought of all those folk and how deeply she detested ecclesiastics of every creed and description, it was hard not to smile.

While resident in her villa she occasionally gave receptions and these—could anything be more ironical?—were considered to be rather exclusive. Residents in the neighbourhood used to say that Madame —— was particular about whom she knew: she would not call on “anybody and everybody” who came to live there. Yet, as those very people knew nothing whatever about her beyond the fact that she was obviously very rich, their only excuse for calling upon her must have been that she *was* rich and therefore likely to entertain. And all the time most likely, she was keeping a sharp lookout for any young girls who might eventually be of use to her! One or two did disappear from the town close to her villa but whether or not she was in any

way responsible for their disappearance I was never able to discover. If ever a female Jekyll and Hyde existed, Messaline was that woman.

Meanwhile the affliction from which she suffered was gradually undermining her health. Outwardly she looked the same—this was in 1926—but she said that all the time she felt she was slowly sinking. If I were writing fiction I should at this point make out that she began to feel remorse for her life of infamy that she sent for a priest or a parson, confessed her sins and eventually died in what is called "the odour of sanctity." Actually she did nothing of the sort. Though aware that death was near at hand she carried on as she always had done so far as she could. She personally attended to her correspondence, made the necessary arrangements for procuring more girls for her houses, interviewed some of the horrible men who worked for her, even considered a scheme for opening two new *maisons de tolérance* in the Malay States.

She had no fear of death as was perhaps natural, seeing that she looked on the hereafter—supposing a hereafter to exist—without fear or even anxiety. If ever she spoke of a possible future life she referred to it always as a fresh experience, a new adventure.

"After all," she would say, "everything is mere conjecture. You come up against Death and you hit it as you would hit a blank wall behind which there may be a Something—or

a Nothing I have read books about a problematical future life, which nobody on earth knows, ever has known or ever (until after death), will know anything about So why should I, why should anybody be afraid of death and what follows it—if anything follows it?"

That was her philosophy, in a sense a sound philosophy in that it prevented her worrying and left her mind at rest

"Why is death such a bogey?" I remember her saying once, that was less than two months before her end "People ought to be taught from childhood that death has no terrors, instead of being brought up in the belief that it is some frightful thing and that after it will come all kinds of horrors—burnings, tortures, misery for one group fantastic forms of happiness for the other group Who was the originator of those tales? And is it not astonishing that rational human beings who presumably have minds of their own actually believe without any questioning what they are told about the life that is supposed to follow this one?"

The attractive girl who for years had lived with her and who worshipped her, became more and more ecstatically devoted to Messaline as she saw her health and strength failing There was something extraordinarily pathetic in that friendship, in the girl's slave like, dog-like devotion to and passionate love for the woman But with those peculiar attachments



it is generally so. It has truly been said that a man's love for a woman or a woman's love for a man, even when the love of both is equally intense, bears no comparison to love of that kind, which, in addition, is usually lifelong, whereas love between the sexes almost invariably wanes and dies. I said girl, but Messaline's friend had become enamoured of her at the age of sixteen or seventeen and the two had been together ten or twelve years. With Messaline, passion, as always, predominated. With her friend true love was uppermost. By that I mean that whereas Messaline—unless I am much mistaken—would never have made any great sacrifice for her companion, the latter would certainly have given her life at any time to save the woman's had the necessity for doing so arisen.

She told me once that the very first time she had ever set eyes on Messaline she had experienced a most extraordinary sensation. She had then only just left school, and on the platform of the railway station at, I think Nantes she had noticed a woman in conversation with a railway official. The woman had happened to look her way, and, their eyes had met. And that single glance had sufficed. The train had come in a moment later and the woman had gone away in it, yet for days and nights afterwards the girl had been haunted by that glance and obsessed by an intense desire and determination to see the stranger again. Months had passed and then at Ver

sailles she had seen her once more and finally succeeded in becoming acquainted with her

Messaline had encouraged her friendship, fanned her passion, and in the end succeeded in inducing her to leave her home to come and live with her ostensibly to perform secretarial duties. She never treated her as she did her victims, never allowed her to have intercourse of any sort with the latter. Indeed during the first two years of their friendship Messaline actually succeeded in keeping secret from her all knowledge of her connection with and interest in the Traffic, believing that if the girl became cognizant of it such knowledge might alienate her affection and her respect. When at last the girl discovered the truth, however, it made no difference whatever, so deep rooted was her fondness, so intense her idolatry.

There are people who think that that sort of *amitié amoureuse* is the outcome of what they call "modern decadence." Actually it dates back through the ages and reached its apex probably about the period of the Italian renaissance. Mirabeau dealt at length with the subject in his famous volume, "*Le Rideau Levé, ou l'Education de Laure*," and so, later, did Eugene Sue and Emile Zola while many references to it are to be found in the writings of Aristophanes and Herondas in the centuries B C.

Towards the end of her life Messaline became additionally interested in the subject of marriage between persons who are diseased

any province of modern life has exhibited. One need not go back to the history of civilization; one need simply turn to the physician and the magistrate in order to learn for what purpose the "sacrament of marriage" is employed, and frequently employed, by the very same men and women who are professed enthusiasts of its moral value.

As the weeks rolled on, Messaline spoke not infrequently of her early days, but never with regret. The old libertine, however, who had loved and adopted her, she could not bear to think about. His character had been so odious, his whole nature so gross, she said. Nor could she forgive her mother for having sold her to the man as though she were a chattel. Being wholly devoid of what we call conscience, and unable to distinguish between right and wrong, nothing that she had done in her life distressed her in the least. She had been instrumental in supplying a demand common to the whole of humanity, and if she had not supplied it somebody else would. That was the way she looked at it. And she quite realized that when she was dead someone else would fill her place.

"Do you ever wonder where my fortune will go when I die?" she one day startled me by asking. It had never occurred to me to wonder; it was no concern of mine, and I told her so. She smiled.

"If you always think only of those things which directly concern you your life must be supremely dull," she replied. "I might have bequeathed some of it to you, but I have not;

your ideas are too quixotic. I believe that if I left you even a legacy you would be so quixotic as to refuse to accept it, knowing the manner in which my fortune has been amassed. Well, it won't be left to charity, or to any of my relatives (*they* would accept it fast enough), or to any of my colleagues in the Traffic, so many of whom I know secretly detest me because they are envious of my commercial success being so much greater than theirs. My friend—she mentioned the girl's name—will inherit the bulk of it, and the remainder—”

She checked herself. She expected me to betray curiosity, but I did not, for I was not interested. What did interest me was the fact that she contemplated the immediate approach of death with such extraordinary equanimity and amazing indifference—as it is said people do who are about to face the gallows.

That was the last time I saw her. I was in London when I read in a French newspaper the announcement of her death—she died in the South of France. It had been agreed between us that after her death I should be at liberty to write this narrative, and at once I set to work upon it from notes I had been compiling since those early days of the War.

Some weeks had passed. I had, on reading the announcement, telegraphed to an address in France for particulars, being curious to know how her life had ended. One morning I received a letter with an inch deep mourning

border. It contained, not, as is usual in France, a complete list of the bereaved relatives, but a short, typed reply to my inquiry. The reply was signed: "*Isodore —*."

Which leads me to suppose that perhaps, after all, the creature whom she had partnered in the most horrible kind of traffic in the world, until he left her, became heir to part of her vast estate.

That is the story of Messaline. There are people who believe reports of the trade in women and children to be a myth. But then there are people who consider everything a myth which they don't want to believe. The story even of my reckless millionaire friend, young Tasker, was disputed by some—they declared that no such person had ever lived, until shown newspaper reports of the *causes célèbres* in which he figured. And so it may be with Messaline, for there are folk who swallow camels yet strain at gnats. Were not W. T. Stead's sensational revelations in the *Pall Mall Gazette* years ago, which led to his imprisonment, disbelieved and his statements contradicted until proved true? I have been told so.

Has there ever been a woman quite like Messaline, a woman so utterly devoid of all human feelings in regard to practically the whole of her sex, such an amazing human document? What most astonishes me when I think of her now is that, in spite of her

extraordinarily evil nature and her distorted mind, she should have proved so singularly attractive to men, as well as to some women, even when advanced in years.

A woman constituted as she was cannot help herself. To rank her among normal women of any class or type, and judge her accordingly, would be as unjust as to rank as sane a man or woman known to be mentally afflicted. She had often expressed the opinion that almost all criminals are not wholly responsible for their actions and that they ought, instead of being punished, to be confined. Certainly I think that she herself might with advantage have been so dealt with—unless use could have been made of her, as suggested earlier—though I maintain, after what I have seen, that the severest punishment should be meted out to the majority of the male and female ghouls who to-day are engaged in the abominable Traffic.

Since this book was written, the League of Nations has published the Report of its Special Body of Experts on the Traffic in Women and Children. The following is the League's summary of this Report:—

"No complete figures are available, but reliable information has been obtained from certain countries which justifies the belief that a traffic of considerable dimensions is being carried on. Many hundreds of women and girls—some of them very young—are transported each year from one country to another for purposes of prostitution. Many of these, but by

no means all were prostitutes in their own country, but nearly always there was evidence that their movements were controlled by others and many of them could not have realised the sort of life to which they would be subjected. In some countries where the number of registered prostitutes is very high 70 per cent are foreign women and it may safely be inferred that the class of clandestine prostitutes in these countries also included a large percentage of foreigners. The statements made to our investigators by members of the underworld agree on the point that there is a constant stream of foreign women proceeding to certain countries. The numbers known are sufficiently large to constitute a serious problem.

International traffic has been taken to mean primarily the direct or indirect procurement and transportation for gain to a foreign country of women and girls for the sexual gratification of one or more other persons but for the purposes of this study it was found impossible entirely to isolate international traffic from the national aspect of commercial sex prostitution. Consideration was also given to certain aspects of the abuse of alcohol and to the traffic in obscene publications and drugs.

THE END

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